THE Hudson REVIEW

JOSEPH BENNETT:
The Tomb of the Diver

ROGER SALE:
L. Frank Baum, and Oz

PHILIP HOBSBAUM:
The Temptation of Giant Despair

JOHN SIMON:
That Championship Season

WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN:
Better Than Tovey?

Poems by PHILIP LEVINE, RICHARD PEVEAR, STEPHEN SANDY, HARVEY SHAPIRO.

Articles and Reviews by MARVIN MUDRICK, VERNON YOUNG, STEPHEN FARBER, B. H. FUSSELL, J. E. CHAMBERLIN, WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD, CHARLES W. MILLARD.

VOLUME XXV, NUMBER 4 • WINTER 1972-73 • $2.00 PER COPY

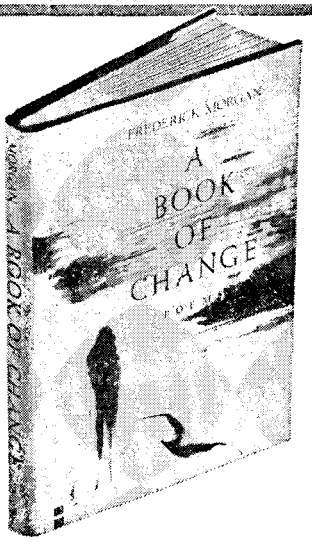
FEB 8 1973
CAL STATE FULLERTON
PERIODICALS/LIBRARY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Frederick Morgan

A BOOK OF CHANGE

Paintings by Hozan Matsumoto



"Morgan has taken 'change after change' showing the range of them through the range of his poems—his only boundaries are universal—as a seasoned traveler in time into eternities."
—John Fandel, *Commonweal*

"This is a *most impressive* book." —Allen Tate

"An exceedingly strong, personal and interesting collection."
—Richmond Lattimore

"I was moved by it, particularly by the poems which speak out of and to your life . . . I found myself put on the line much more than is the case surely with most contemporary books of poems."
—William H. Pritchard

"They seem to touch some far-off visionary sense of life."
—Robert Fitzgerald

"Sustaining, helpful, encouraging poems that engage me as a writer and person." —William Stafford

"These poems will move many people very deeply, irresistibly."
—A. R. Ammons

"A personal document of great integrity and testimonial force."
—Hayden Carruth

$7.95 **CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS**
125 Years of Responsible Publishing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editor:

FREDERICK MORGAN

Managing Editor:

IRENE SKOLNICK

Associate Editor:

PAULA DEITZ

Assistant Editor:

CHARLOTTE WIGGERS

Editorial Board:

MARY EMMA ELLIOTT
MARIUS BEWLEY
HAYDEN CARRUTH
ROGER SALE

Associate:

EDMUND T. DELANEY

Contributing Editors:

JOHN SIMON, *Theatre*
VERNON YOUNG, *Film*

THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022. It is a member of The Council of Literary Magazines and is indexed in the Social Sciences and Humanities Index.

Subscription $7.00 per year in U. S.; foreign including Canada $8.00. Single copy $2.00. U. S. distributor: B. De Boer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N. J. 07110. Subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Back issues and reprints of Volumes I—XXIII available from AMS Press, Inc., 56 East 13th Street, New York, N. Y. 10003. Microfilms of Volumes I—XXIII available from University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106.

Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. No responsibility is assumed for their loss or injury.

Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editors.

Printed in the United States of America. Second Class postage paid at New York, N. Y. and at additional mailing offices.

Registered U. S. Patent Office.

Copyright © 1972 by The Hudson Review, Inc.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VOLUME XXV
NUMBER 4
WINTER 1972-73

THE Hudson Review

CONTENTS

Northway Tanka; Spider (*poems*)	STEPHEN SANDY	539
The Tomb of the Diver	JOSEPH BENNETT	543
The Killing of Orpheus; Mnemosyne; Little Acmeist Elegy; Waiting (*poems*)	RICHARD PEVEAR	568
L. Frank Baum, and Oz	ROGER SALE	571
Late Moon; War (*poems*)	PHILIP LEVINE	593
The Temptation of Giant Despair	PHILIP HOBSBAUM	597
Six Poems	HARVEY SHAPIRO	613
That Championship Season	JOHN SIMON	616
Waiting for Tutankhamen	B. H. FUSSELL	626
Better Than Tovey?	WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN	633
Outlaws and Snobs	STEPHEN FARBER	647
Brancusi and the Neo-Classical Tradition	CHARLES W. MILLARD	654

Reviews

Nature and Vision: or Dubious Antithesis	VERNON YOUNG	659
Saint-Simon's Kingdom	MARVIN MUDRICK	675
Those Who Can't	WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD	685
The Arias That Spiritual Fiddlings Make	J. E. CHAMBERLIN	693
Enemies, Foreigners, and Friends	ROGER SALE	703
Letters to the Editor		534
Notes on Contributors		537
Index to Volume XXV		716

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRINCETON · UNIVERSITY · PRESS
PRINCETON · UNIVERSITY · PRESS

Metaphors of Self
The Meaning of Autobiography
James Olney

". . . a notable and highly individual contribution to humanistic scholarship."
$12.50 —*New York Review of Books*

Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus
Theodore Ziolkowski

The aesthetic challenge of adapting the traditional motifs in the life of Jesus—the last supper, lonely agony, betrayal, trial and crucifixion—to the modern fiction hero is here examined in the novels of Papini, Kazantzakis, Hesse, Greene, Faulkner, Steinbeck, and others.
$10.00

Hemingway
The Writer as Artist
Carlos Baker

In this fourth edition the first two chapters have been completely revised to incorporate new material, and there are two new chapters which discuss Hemingway's posthumously published books, *A Moveable Feast* and *Islands in the Stream.*
Cloth, $12.50; paper, $2.95

C.P. Cavafy: Selected Poems
Translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard

These translations are completely new. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard have rendered Cavafy's most significant and characteristic poems in a style and rhythm as natural and apt in English as the poet's is in Greek.
Cloth, $7.50; paper, $1.75

Collected Poems of Lucio Piccolo
Translated and Edited by Brian Swann and Ruth Feldman

"These brilliant new translations will serve to introduce a whole new sensibility to Anglo-American readers." —*Anthony Burgess*
$8.50

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY 08540

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRINCETON · UNIVERSITY · PRESS
PRINCETON · UNIVERSITY · PRESS

The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge
General Editor, Kathleen Coburn; Associate Editor Bart Winer
Volume 6: Lay Sermons
Edited by R.J. White

This edition contains *The Statesman's Manual* and *A Lay Sermon,* printed from their original editions. The introduction gives their personal and political background. *Bollingen Series LXXV*
$12.50

Samuel Johnson and the Tragic Sense
Leopold Damrosch, Jr.

"A brilliant book, which constitutes a serious but amiable and original contribution to the subject. It is tactful, learned, responsible, and wonderfully written. It is executed with rare imagination and style."
—Paul Fussell $9.50

On Gide's Prométhée
Private Myth and Public Mystification
Kurt Weinberg

Kurt Weinberg sees *Prométhée* as a modern allegory, a parable wrought of allusions, symbols, and images drawn from classical antiquity and Calvinist theology, in which the young Gide exorcised his moral and religious obsessions.
Princeton Essays in European and Comparative Literature $7.50

Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century
The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres
Winthrop Wetherbee

Winthrop Wetherbee analyzes the poetry of Bernardus Silvestris and Alain de Lille, and defines the intellectual milieu of the Chartrian poets and their Platonic conception of nature, man, and poetry.
$12.50

The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World, 300 B.C.-A.D. 300
George Kennedy

By tracing the development of Greek and Latin oratory George Kennedy shows that the art of persuasion the Romans inherited from the Greeks gradually became an art more concerned with the secondary characteristics of rhetoric: style and artistic effect.
Cloth, $18.50; limited paperback, $9.75

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir:

I wonder if I may make a mild protest against Marvin Mudrick's comments, in your Summer issue, on the remarks of Henry James, in *The American Scene,* about the Jewish immigrants in New York. I can easily understand that no Jewish reader could respond to those remarks with anything but apoplectic rage; even an English reader of James, like myself, often finds himself enraged by James's comments on English society (especially when he imagines himself to be *praising* it!). But I think that if one looks at those passages in *The American Scene* more coolly and objectively, and if one concentrates less on James's infuriating tone and more on what he actually says, it is possible to see some things in them which are not entirely to be condemned.

Of course James shared that casual, thoughtless, almost instinctive anti-Semitism which was universal then (and much later) among people of his class and ancestry. But his basic attitude to the Jewish "explosion" in New York does not seem to me one of unmitigated horror and disgust; in the usual Jamesian fashion, the fashion of a detached observer, he was rather intrigued and impressed. What he did recognize, beyond doubt, was that this was an enormously important phenomenon, and one which was going to have a deep and permanent effect on American life and culture. (And as for his horror at the smell of that East Side Yiddish theater—well, isn't it likely that a packed theater, then and there, *would* have stunk to high heaven? I suspect that if that olfactory experience could be recreated in 1972, Mr. Mudrick's nostrils would be just as grossly offended as were those of Henry James in 1905.) James goes out of his way, more than once, to record that the new immigrants were remarkably sober and quiet—in James's own words, that they had "decency and dignity." That may seem condescending to Mr. Mudrick, but isn't James recording something to the *credit* of the immigrants, and something, moreover, which most gentile, and genteel, observers then would not have recorded? They are desperately poor, he is saying, they are incredibly overcrowded, but they are not a horde of barbarians.

Moreover, he sees one point, which, I suspect, very few Americans in 1905 were able to see. He sees that this invasion is going to produce a profound and durable change in American speech and literature. When he observes that it will bring about a radical revolution in American idiom, he is surely showing remarkable foresight; he is anticipating the time when American literature will no longer be dominated by the Anglo-saxon tradition and by writers of Anglo-saxon descent; he is foreseeing the Bellows and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New books by

ROBERT BLY

Sleepers Joining Hands. The first collection since his National Book Award-winning *The Light Around the Body*, including short poems, some prose passages and two of the most startling poems in American literature. "A rousing book."—*Library Journal* $5.95, paper $2.95

MAXINE KUMIN

Up Country: Poems of New England. The special world of New England is the focus of this new volume by "a fine, tender, and luminous poet."—*Stanley Kunitz*. $6.50

HOLLIS SUMMERS

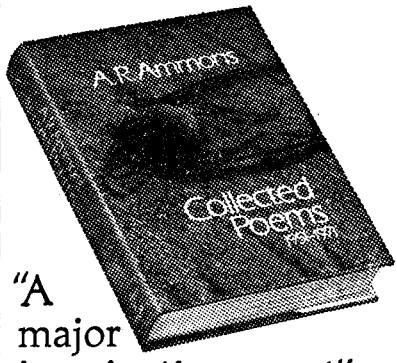
The Garden. This strange and subtle novel about a typical American family vacationing on Malta is "a masterpiece of grim magic."—*Jessamyn West*. $6.95

LOUIS SIMPSON

North of Jamaica. The Pulitzer Prize-winning poet engagingly probes his life and the sources of his work—childhood in the West Indies, college in New York, wartime combat in Europe, teaching at Berkeley, a writer's choices, and the demands of art. $6.95

At bookstores

Harper & Row
10 E. 53rd St., New York 10022
1817



"A major imaginative event"
—JOHN HOLLANDER

COLLECTED POEMS
1951-1971
by
A.R.Ammons

In this collection, A. R. Ammons brings together more than 300 of his most important new and previously published poems.

"It will seem increasingly to many attentive readers that this volume **—the most distinguished book of American verse,** in my judgment, since the publication of Wallace Stevens' *Collected Poems* in 1955 —marks the permanent establishment of a major visionary poet."
—HAROLD BLOOM

"Since Robert Frost, there has been no one like Ammons for encounters with the natural world."
—DAVID KALSTONE

"His spirit is surely one of the largest to speak among us, today, of what we are and are not."
—RICHARD HOWARD

At all bookstores, $12.50

Norton
55 Fifth Ave./N.Y. 10003

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mailers and how many more? He remarks, in a phrase Mr. Mudrick does not quote, that the American "Accent of the Future" may well become "the most beautiful in the world"; but "we shall not know it for English." Given that for James "English" meant "*English* English" (and for him it couldn't mean anything else), what can one say about that except that it is an astonishingly accurate prophecy? Perhaps he doesn't much like the prospect; but I suppose that everyone, under the Constitution, is entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of his prejudices. More important than what James felt about it is the fact that he *saw*. And more important, in this context, than the immigrants' Jewishness is the fact that their linguistic ancestry was not English.

Finally, it may be said in James's defense that he nowhere suggests any discriminating, social or political, against the Jews: a fact which, to my mind, makes somewhat unfair Mr. Mudrick's description of him as a "political provocateur." One can hardly blame what James wrote in 1905 for what happened some forty years later in Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

PATRICK CRUTTWELL

Ottawa, Canada

Dear Sir:

One of my Gentile friends, disagreeing with Mr. Cruttwell, finds James's epicene spite as nauseous as I do.

MARVIN MUDRICK

Santa Barbara, California

*

Dear Sir:

Friends and former students of Stanley Edgar Hyman have established a fund in his memory, to support an annual lecture in literary criticism at Bennington College, where he taught for so many years. Those of us who were close to Stanley were shocked and saddened by his sudden early death just as he was approaching a larger and more extensive contribution to literary thought.

I know many of your readers who valued his intellectual vitality have mourned his absence. I hope that some of them might wish to share in remembering him by contributing to the fund. I would be most grateful to you if you could make known to them the existence of this project and our need for their support.

SONYA RUDIKOFF

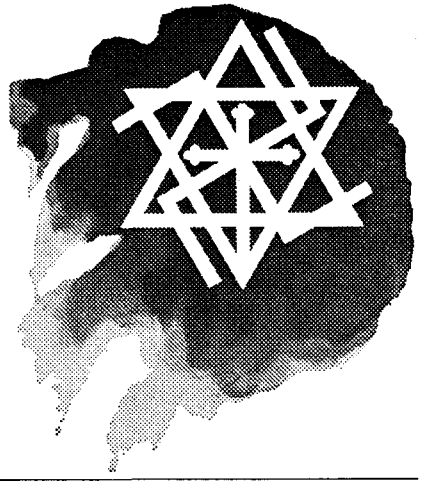
Princeton, N.J.

P. S. Checks should be drawn to the order of "Bennington College—The Stanley Hyman Fund," and sent to the College at Bennington, Vermont, 05201.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard Bankowsky's new novel is about humanity. And man's lack of it.

THE BARBARIANS AT THE GATES
Richard Bankowsky
A NOVEL



Is it possible to be a good Nazi and a good man? to love, amid depravity and lust? to be civilized, among barbarians? to stay sane, in a world gone crazy? If not, is it at least possible to atone? This shattering novel answers those questions brilliantly, as it portrays the crumbling humanity of one man caught in the chaos of World War II.

$7.95 at all bookstores

An Atlantic Monthly Press Book
LITTLE, BROWN and COMPANY

Notes on Contributors

STEPHEN SANDY's most recent volume of poems is *Roofs* (Houghton Mifflin).

RICHARD PEVEAR lives in York Harbor, Maine, and has taught briefly at the University of New Hampshire.

ROGER SALE's latest book, *Modern Heroism: Essays on D. H. Lawrence, William Empson and J. R. R. Tolkein* has just been published by the University of California Press.

PHILIP LEVINE's latest volume of poetry, *They Feed They Lion,* is published by Atheneum. He has a new volume in preparation.

PHILIP HOBSBAUM is a British poet whose latest book is *Women and Animals.* He has also just completed *A Reader's Guide to Charles Dickens.*

HARVEY SHAPIRO* is the author of four books of poetry, the last two being *This World* (Wesleyan University Press, 1971) and *Battle Report* (Wesleyan University Press, 1966). He is working on a new book, tentatively entitled *In Brooklyn Harbor.*

JOHN SIMON's three books of criticism are *Acid Test, Private Screenings,* and *Movies into Film.* His latest volume, *Ingmar Bergman Directs,* has just been published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

B. H. FUSSELL* has taught English at Connecticut College and Douglass College. She is completing graduate work at Rutgers University.

WILLIAM YOUNGREN teaches in the Department of English of Boston College.

STEPHEN FARBER's book on the inadequacies of the present movie rating system, *The Movie Rating Game,* was published this fall by Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C.

J. E. CHAMBERLIN is at present on a leave of absence from the University of Toronto, where he is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, to work with the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs in Ottawa. He has completed a book on Paul Klee.

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New from Columbia

EZRA POUND:
An Introduction to the Poetry
SISTER BERNETTA QUINN, O.S.F.
A fresh new look at this great poet written for the nonspecialist but containing insights and facts not appearing elsewhere.
Columbia Introductions to Twentieth-Century American Poetry $8.95

BLACK SHORT STORY ANTHOLOGY
WOODIE KING, EDITOR
Twenty-nine stories from the 1950s and 1960s that bring the reader to a profounder understanding of the Black experience. $12.50

THOMAS HARDY AND RURAL ENGLAND
MERRYN WILLIAMS
A discussion of Hardy's complex attitudes towards social change as mirrored in the obscure people of his Wessex villages. Ms. Williams shows how Hardy strove to preserve what was best in the past without perpetuating generations of injustice. $10.00

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS AND THE VICTORIAN TEMPER
ALISON GREEN SULLOWAY
Viewing Hopkins as an "eminent Victorian," as well as a Catholic and a Jesuit, the author shows how his poetry exhibits, as much as the works of Ruskin and Carlyle, the "highly conscious moral and psychological analysis of self in society that typifies the Victorian temper." $12.50

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
Address for orders: 136 South Broadway, Irvington, New York 10533

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STEPHEN SANDY

Northway Tanka

White leaves, magenta
leaves, curled in grass. A brown mesh
of needles, freshly
spread. One opened husk, the nut
tucked safe in a secret place.

*

Sun struts from cloud then;
now mica stars stream past, make
macadam twinkle
racing under, around me;
mighty pines of night, each side.

*

Over the cleared fields
striding and mountain shadows
stream, draining earth's warmth.
Outside, a dog whines.
A clear sky, cleared for winter.

*

Black spaces under pines.
Ahead, a vast cold front, cloud
range level, half to
zenith: a wall of winter
at the far end of the world.

*

Blind as pain these men
stand, stretching by their parked cars.
Hoods shine apart where

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beyond mountains swim into
the great mandala of light.

*

Dolorous granite
rock like a crouching lion,
tumbled by glaciers!
Rock like a crouching lion,
rock like a crouching lion!

*

A shred of cloud trails
the mountain face; catches
on a pine: below
a striped lump that is, that was
raccoon; and one Piels beer can.

*

Lifted from its bed
by a passing wind the leaf
raised the brown profile
of a chipmunk. Then it sank
back; but stood again; again.

*

To stand in a field
silenced and drained for winter
where one clover blooms
and hear, muffled by distance,
the geese calling for summer!

Ribboning silence
they keep forming, keep a long
communal mewing.
I stood there when I heard this
wan assumption of their cries.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

*

The two-rut dirt road
trailed from the four-lane highway
dissolving shortly
in dense toils, second-growth scrub.
My country, O my country!

*

When it was summer
the long rain fell silently
soaking grass and earth:
now on beds of brittle leaves
cold rains tattoo ceaselessly.

*

Still in place the leaves
of a poplar, lime and gray,
simmer together
on the wind. A squall flaps them,
the words blow up off my page.

*

I walk these dry paths
under bare branch and bare sky.
Through the leaves' ruin,
churning loudly, my feet go.
With snow, this too will be stilled.

*

When I drove southward,
through trees ranked on ridge crest
the sun, setting, West,
paced me: a rapid fire
stuttered between trunks stock still.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Spider

The redwings have been calling this half hour;
the sun, falling, will draw away
their cries. Between the radiator and the sill
an unhurried spider seems to look,

wondering how to move. The bodiless head
—or headless body—held onto
the legs, a dome of small girders, arching.
Then gripping the silk line he moved

out, hand over hand down to the grid, over
and over the spaces set off by lines
spun from the mouth. He paused before the sting,
limbs lifting and falling, wrapping, keen

for the firefly mistaken there. The sun,
beyond, was melting the last braid
of branches in its eye. It canceled
each scratch on the window I looked through.

I closed my eyes; there islands of gold trailed
across the blackness of closed lids.
The spider tied up his prey; hung there, gainly,
at rest. The trees are a gray wall

zoning the world; downhill a car speeds through
the film of the visible. A small
sublime of violence keeps streaming from him.
The birds move off, and their song dies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOSEPH BENNETT

The Tomb of the Diver

Joseph Bennett, a founding editor of The Hudson Review, *died on March 28, 1972, in Perth, Australia. His obituary appeared in our Summer, 1972 issue. The journal that follows was sent to us early in 1972, shortly before the onset of his last illness.*

THE ROME AIRPORT LIFTS toward the wheels of the aircraft; one can see the smog-wrapped heat of August rising from the pavement. One has left Bahrein, where the night temperature is 110° F., all dry and healthy and air-conditioned inside a gilded airport resplendent with photos of the sheik, the world's richest man; before that was Bombay, still night, wet in the drizzle of the monsoon and tending to coolness; Singapore as usual, efficient; but Bali, the point of departure, dazzling in the dry season, the huge rollers throwing up their spray on the Kuta beach against the rock-dike of the Tuban airstrip; the flowers as if etched in steel against hard blue; cold evenings, with the sun into the north and no moisture in the air to hold the heat of the day.

At Sanur the beach dwellers, in huts, from the still untouched islands of Nusa Lembong and Nusa Penida, clinging to their beliefs in *leyaks,* evil witches, huddle shivering in their frayed sarongs against the cold, which will only last for six weeks. It is Bali's most brilliant, flawless time. At last one can reach up and touch the great stars over Nusa Penida, over Lombok island and the group of peaks of Gunung Agung and Batur, above the mountain lake where the cones raise themselves, Batur throwing up its red cauldrons of sparkling flame every twenty minutes. There are almost no tourists; the Australians who are supposed to come in the summer have not arrived this year; the curved monster rectangle of the American hotel, Bung Karno's folly, is empty. It duplicates in a packaged unit the paralysis of its ugly sisters all over the world, with guests, insurance salesmen and car dealers from Dusseldorf and Grosse Pointe, hobbling like convalescents in a giant sick ward among the holes of the minia-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ture golf course and the swimming pool where Spiro Agnew played, the "Bali Hai" Supper Club roof nightclub, from which Ford and Rockefeller and MacNamara and Trudeau surveyed the heavy rains of the strait across to demon-haunted Nusa Penida in the fashionable monsoon season when official guests complete their Potemkin tours—why is the hot steaming tarmac of the Rome airport rising up at my wheels as we drop over the baking ruins of Ostia Antica—why have I left one of the few places where the world is sane and structured, proceeding in accordance with stable rhythms, for this jumble of discontent and petroleum fumes—

The *ferragosto* holidays are coming to an end, and the airport has a deserted air. One relief: the officials are too bored, too dazed with the heat, too discontented, minds fixed on their own vacations, to gaze at your papers, much less stamp them—they wave you through, not even looking—after five years in Asia, away from Italy, it comes as a shock to realize there is not going to be the usual long puzzling over of documents and visas, the usual consultations, the questionings that one has gotten used to in the East. With a roar the automobile civilization embraces you to its heart.

Everywhere petrol is being burned: its exhaustion products cling close to the ground, permeating clothing, shoes, lungs . . . Drivers press around, jockeying for advantage; faces of rage, envy, pride; seeking, shoving, jostling; faces which, mild when on foot, take on a demonic aspect behind the wheel. The cars speed past.

In the center of old Rome tires are wrenched to the utmost, rounding the sharp intersections of the ancient streets; the vehicles careen and crash and the rubber screams all night; as you walk, without sidewalks, the fenders brush your clothing. Beware.

If the breakdown of the automobile civilization advanced by America as recently as the 1920's is to be seen most graphically, it is to be seen in Italy today; not on the mammoth, abstract, flat-planed Euclidean parkways with their curves, slices and viaducts, but in the old cities, Rome and Florence and Naples. In Rome, in the heart of the ancient section, the contrasts are most vivid. The Italians hurl themselves into the life of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

machine, its competitiveness, its cries, its suspense—the compensation for an earlier life perhaps as a countryman with a wagon drawn by oxen, or as a cyclist.

At night they watch television. The brains are devoured by transistors; the feet reach for the pedals.

A new political issue may well arise: not Left versus Right, or socialism versus capitalism, not commissars and chairmen versus military cliques, but pedestrian versus motorist. The heart of old Rome, in the area bounded by the bend of the Tiber and the Corso, is distressed daily by automotive friction. It cries out to be saved; there is a concentration here of survivor interest, and it is a small plot of only four hundred acres.

Motorists haunt, then hunt down pedestrians; they rush to cross, hearts beating wildly; the race is on that has destroyed the old cities and the quality of their life; not only the fumes and the harrowing of the eyes and lungs, but the actual pursuit of survivors in these centers turned over to the wrenching and careening of the automobile and motorbike. The bronze horses of Venice must be taken down; they cannot withstand the fumes of the petroleum refineries. The old cities crumble away at their hearts, crawling with gas-producing metal bugs. Russia and the communist countries build their Fiat plants naively, unaware of what is awaiting them; a capitalist disease from which communism had heretofore been inmmune because, working from a lower standard of living, the communist countries have not until lately had the problem of consumer preferences.

A violent storm has driven the waves into breaking crests around Ortygia, the peninsula of ancient Syracuse; the streets are drenched with spray. Proceeding south, past Pachino, rounding Cape Passero, one comes upon hundreds of motor trawlers sheltering in the lee of the cape. They have been dragging, individually working their steel nets, all around the southern and eastern coasts of Sicily. By an accident of weather they are revealed; caught in the web of the storm; one can see how the eggs and spawn and newborn fish are destroyed by the fine mesh.

The coastal fishermen, in traditional communities where the local waters have given livelihood for generations, cannot get fish from their nets to feed their families; there has ceased to be any excess to sell to buy bread and necessities. Dependent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on oars until two decades ago, now with small diesel motors, theirs is a dying way of life and theirs are dead communities if there is no possibility of tourism.

The mafia of the motor trawlers is among the most powerful in Italy. A Deputy comes to the small coastal village where I have landed and advises the fishermen: "Buy a motor-trawler yourselves." The newest, electronically-outfitted monsters cost between $500,000 and $1,000,000. Coastal fishermen are expected to vanish; they are expected to go to Germany; they are too scattered, too ill-educated, too poor, a thin minority in territorial voting units without political power. Vanish. We cannot make money out of you.

One evening two giant motor-trawlers appear on our anchorage, and the owner comes down from Salerno.

The ends of the fingers of one hand have been blown off, sign of a hard early life, when the detonation of illegal bombs provided bonanzas of fish. He is surrounded by an atmosphere of basic bank loans topped by monthly-payment marginal loans; his basic stake came from the government's developmental fund for the South. His stubborn, stubble-chinned body represents the vocal point of many interests; those of the bankers and the lenders, insatiable; those of the owners; those of the political interests, city, provincial, and Parliamentary, which he must keep conciliated. His dress is that of a small-boat coastal fisherman on a Sunday.

He is treated as a local pope by the coastal fishermen. Looking at his blown-off fingers, they see in him a chance to become the same, the chance for employment. The food is good; the men, working over the obscenities of the dialect, fling the heavy tuna own the chute. The abundance has driven the price down to a low of 300 lire a kilo (22¢ a pound); his mind calculates the narrowing margin of profit against his tremendous volume. He balances his accounts beneath the weight of a pyramid that stretches all the way to Rome. His squashed felt hat sits with its brim upturned on his grizzled head; his open collar-button shirt, frayed threads visible, is collarless.

Now all along the coast of the Tyrrhenian, in the dry season, real estate speculators are setting fire to headland and mountain, to the irreplaceable groves of umbrella pine and chestnut and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oak on the heights; to stone pine on the foreshores. Owners, hoping for higher prices with time, are being forced to sell. Bared to erosion are the vertically-dropping areas that survived the goat-grazing operations of the aristocratic proprietors of the nineteenth century; the earth melts away. Local government goes through the required motions; their interests, their future are those of the developers; they want quick building, a strip of motels, drive-ins, beach cottages; not a long wait for higher prices, when a new set of local government may be in office.

From Anacapri the nymphs have departed. As late as 1964 they were there, driven from their haunts on the heights of Damecuta and the cliffs by the building of the auto road to the Blue Grotto in 1957. They took refuge in the long declining stretch from Caprile to Punta Carena, traversed by a footpath through the rustling oaks of Materita, down descending levels to the sea; from a high tower they could look out above the pink brick of the lighthouse; reaching into the jagged narrow inlets the dark blue sea glittered. All along the path, under olives and vines, under oaks, their voices murmured; relics of a time when Capri was made up of groves; when there were only footsteps among the dark shade of the trees, only the sea glimpsed through arches of green limbs; only the sound of oars, the voice of a fisherman hauling at his nets. We are here, they murmured, letting us sense some rustle of their garments. In 1965 and 1966, it became known that they were to be driven away. There was the rapaciousness of Rome, a huge and blunt-nosed, blind, barrel-mouthed shark, nudging and nosing its way among the rocks of profit; the owner of the bar, the operator of the shop, the small pensioner, the proprietor of a vineyard or olive grove were allowed to hold pieces of land in among the blocks controlled off-island in the vast area, some 6,000 acres, destined to be opened up.

"Who are these people, from Milan and Venice, from Florence, foreigners, not Italians; aesthetes, professors, aristocrats; artists, communists; people who never lived in dark huts, damp and cold, without matching sets of mirrored, veneered, upholstered furniture; who never lived without cars, without overstuffed beds, without heat and hot water, without electricity, without television, without telephones, without plumbing, without inside

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

toilets, without running water—who are these to deny us our share?"

The locals marched behind the banner of progress; they would not become rural museum-dwellers, inhabitants of an island Venice.

But there were no dwellings in the area other than the mist of the nymphs in the boles of trees; nymphs sparkled in the grove, rippling their tissues, nymphs observed in the shimmer of light and moonlight and sealight gleaming on their garments. . . .

The road was built; the speculators accepted a ten-year moratorium on development. Whether or not now more villas are built is of little importance; at the first smell of fumes the nymphs vanished. The asphalt swallows up much of the path; and after skirting Materita, entirely so; the last half of the path is completely gone; it is still possible to wander among the trees along the old gate of Materita, but never out of hearing of the horns of trucks and buses; the fumes of carbon gases; the glitter of chromium, windshields and plate windows reflected through the screen of the leaves; the noise, the cough of motors, the snarl, the grinding of gears on the ascent. These beings, all tissue and grace, intangible and elusive, have left the glades, leaving some fragment of their dress behind in our hands. . . .

The old Migliera path leads its worn stones beneath the hanging vines and the high branches of the olives. At the beginning the clanging iron seats of the chair-lift, with their dangling legs, rise above your head; later, where one slipped unobtrusively into grace and freedom, wooden runways have been raised over the sequences of steps; thus the three-wheeled Vespa truck, snapping and snorting, can thrust its way along the length to the primitive lookout, transformed into a belvedere with concrete seats for ladies whose hair has been done; there is a dedicatory inscription to the heroes who made it possible, and a pretentious bar.

On the way back I will not step off the deeply sunk trace (one must climb a steep bank) to accommodate the mini-truck drivers. They line up behind. I recognize one or two, owners of small vineyards and olive groves; one truck is full of empty soda bottles from the all-demanding bar. I mutter a few words in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

German; German is the magic language; the Germans bring the money. They shake their heads: a road is what is needed, a proper, asphalt road; if only their mayor and council were more enterprising, like those of Ischia, which, totally girdled by a motor road, is stacked around its shore bumper-to-bumper, so that a car can move in the port only if another car moves miles away on the opposite side of the island.

If the ancient continent is to perish in the grasp of the motor car, it presents a crisis of identity: it does not seem to matter so much if the landscape of North or South America, or Africa or Australia is ruined. But to have the heartland destroyed by a device for locomotion that has yet to finish its fifth decade, the whole palimpsest blotted out on the grounds of convenience transportation, is a kind of cultural genocide which seems inherent in the nature of democracy; one which it would take kings and emperors, Habsburgs and Bourbons, not Chambers of Deputies and generals, to stop.

Over the whole mess Montini presides, rigid and lifeless, with the look of a wryly undernourished butcher bird. Taught, schooled, disciplined and kept in obscurity by a rigorous and unconceding Pacelli, he lacks the sense of drama, the histrionic equipment, to embody the Church's rhetoric and its pageantry, which are its resource today in a world starved by drabness; Montini has no vanity, that is his trouble; it was Pacelli's lusts that made him lean and dangerous and vulpine, as Mussolini attested in the negotiations leading up to the Lateran treaty.

Digging in June, 1968, at a grade crossing south of Paestum exposed a tomb, which, after drying, was placed on public view in May, 1970. It is the only specimen of Greek painting extant, and it is a complete cycle of the symposium scenes familiar from ceramic painting and literary sources. It is dated approximately 480 B.C., and is either the work of an Attic painter, established in the colonies, working with an assistant trained in a more archaic style, or of provincial painters trained in Attic styles. To have paintings commissioned to decorate the interior of a tomb is a novelty contrary to Greek religious beliefs.

On first glimpse of the paintings what is obvious is litheness and subtlety, speed and grace, the communicable intensity of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

elegiac emotion. Ceramic painting by contrast seems stiff and awkward, cluttered, a more crude and commercial, salable art, for an export industry. Ceramic painting, with its distortion of figures to take care of rounded or swelling surfaces, its cramming of every possible detail into an overcrowded space, can give little idea of the freedom and élan, the flexibility and cursiveness of the work of these painters.

The slabs show the usual symposium scenes arranged for after-the-banquet; the *kottabos* game of wine-throwing; the ecstasy induced by the flautist; the couches shared by couples and lovers. The wine is drawn; the lyres are played, and, most important, the guest departs to the accompaniment of a flute-player, a white-clad girl who escorts guests into or out of the banquet. This guest, preceded by the flute-player and an ephebe archaically stylized, is not a usual guest; he is the host of the banquet and his departure is that from life. The life he led is shown by the bravura and sophisticated immediacy of the paintings.

Above on the lid-slab a youth dives from a platform into the rounded sea, showing the curve of a distant horizon and the rolling of the waves. Akin to the diver making the leap in the Etruscan tomb of Hunting and Fishing, the diver is the soul of the departing guest leaping into the unknown, freed from the body.

Here the chapter closes, for there are no more painted Greek tombs; only the cruder, heavy-figured Samnite-Lucanian examples of a century and a half later. This set of paintings is revelatory of the state of mind of an extraordinary man: a Greek born in the colonies, with no trace of local blood, enamored of Attic tradition; enamored of the symposium; an adherent of mystical cults of the after-life developed in Magna Grecia. He planned the cycle, and he found a painter of genius to execute it, a superstition, of the after-life, inexplicable to the mind of the mainland Greek, incompatible to Attica; illogically, this victim expects to partake of a symposium of lovers throughout eternity.

An archaeological discovery: these five slabs should not be demeaned by comparing them, say, to Tutankhamen's jewelry-box, his gilt-furniture toy-shop. Two of the five slabs, executed by the friend of the deceased, may rank among great paintings. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

art is neither primitive nor hieratic, not highly mannered, not stylized. It is highly personal; emotional, eloquent and evocative; at once declaratory and elegiac; and in the end the classic statement is made: death is purified of melancholy; the passing of a soul is celebrated with laurels, and the guest of passage, whose banquet grows more serene and enduring, whose wine becomes an elixir, stays the flesh in permanent attitudes on these limestone slabs. There is sunlight embedded in these thick wedges of porous local table-stone.

In Naples the impact of the revolution in male hair styles on the already hirsute and purple-suited local *guappos* has produced a clashing of contraries like the backwave of an incoming breaker returned by the shore to clash with the next incoming line of surf, thus producing fountains in the sea.

If the quality of life in Rome has deteriorated, that of Naples has collapsed. Today the city resembles Caracas, or pre-Castro Havana with its Spanish castles, more than the Naples of even twenty years ago.

In the fashionable trattorias frequented by speculators, above the Galleria and at Mergellina, the alumni of a crack regiment—the Granatieri di Sardegna—are dining as tourists. They have arrived from all over the country, prosperous, physically large in their correct lounge outfits of blue blazer, striped tie, and dark trousers. They have been hailed in the newspapers, by the mayor, by posters; traffic is stopped for them. The guappos eye them from the neighboring tables. The hair of the guappos, traditionally curling in long sideburns and clustering all over the neck at the shirt collar, now falls about the shoulders; it cries out for a ribbon or a clasp. They like to drink hairy soup, hairy wine. The purple stripes of the suitings zigzag upward from footgear that have been compressed to stabbing stiletto points curled at the top. Where purple stripes, zigzagging, meet zones of contrasting color—a yellow area succeeding on that of a blue—they alter direction and whirl in spirals like suns or crab-nebulae; thus a circular motion interrupts their horizontal-vertical play.

Cuffs are folded back in multiple layers to be buttoned or unbuttoned; vests are double and triple-breasted affairs, lapeled; they are brocaded or occur in taffeta, in silk damask, of exploding, planetary colors. Shirts have starched protruding ruffles, laces, in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

white and differing colors; the stand-up stock, high-collared, of the Prince Regent, rises so that into it the blue-shaven jowls may be sunk, for the guappos will not wear beards; their soul emerges from the top of their heads. A regimental conventioneer offers a guappo a drink. The guappo snorts, baring his teeth.

Red Grand-Touring cars made by Modenese custom-tailors await them outside, their motors tuned for cold or hot weather, city or country driving. They proceed alone about the city equipped with the addresses of flats; moving from business to pleasure; they prefer eating alone in crowded places; they send the dishes back to the kitchen; they smell the fish, pronouncing it inedible. The waiters memorize their wines and sauces and mineral waters; know whether it is to be boiled or fried; the owner, or manager, whose name is across the front of the awning, comes humbly before them. Leaving, they throw a bill crumpled into a ball on the table, and do not wait for change; else they will stalk out and not pay at all. No one questions their right. The car watcher places their red monsters in position; they roar off, exhaust mufflers out, radio blaring. They have plans for hotels and villas, carbarets, neon-lit, by the sea, at profits to them in the thousand percents.

Proceeding south below Paestum, awakening a long-forgotten dialect, one is amazed at how little the hill towns have changed: Pisciotta, Camerota, San Giovanni a Piro. . . . The roads are still sliding, the chestnuts and walnuts still growing; the white pigs nuzzling on them are polished and pink. Remittances make the towns agreeable and clean; a surprising number of young women are raising babies there, on money from Caracas and the North; from Caracas the men will return every two years, or three; very often they bring men their own age, widowers; these, with their assured properties, they marry to their daughters of eighteen. Formerly a huge American car, resplendent with Caracas plates, accompanied them. Now the air trip compels them to go about in hired cars. Nubile young women crowd the doors, scanning the horizon for husbands.

But as one nears the sea the roads improve and gas stations appear. It is only on the heights that one sits the winter through in stone rooms on a twisting street in a cold narrow town, dominated by rain and a church bell; looking down from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ramparts in front of the church . . . there is still no plumbing. On the coast the goat-boys, with their reed flutes, have disappeared to Milan where they work as garage assistants; the black grease drips into mouths and nostrils that were familiar with every wild herb and root. The coast of the Cilento waxes fat; the concrete road, newly built, threads galleries along the sea where land values have risen ten times in five years. Each year in August the Italians come to the sea; following the parkways and leaving these they enter the world of roadside facilities and amusements, billboards replacing trees, concealing the view of the sea.

Five years ago this was the preserve of gulls and Saracen watch-towers, quail that came up from Africa to strike Punta Infreschi; small coastal boats which each evening set out their nets in hope of finding a few fish. In my small fishing village, 15,000 cars attempt to enter the dead end road each day; there are no beds; the children wail, relieving themselves between the cars. My piece of goat pasture abuts in a sea of stalled vehicles; to reach it I must thread my way among these tear-stained families, who have lost the ability to walk a hundred yards, trapped in difficult postures in thin sheetmetal cages, stinking little motors throbbing.

It is not the locals who have gotten rich, though they are allowed to feed on the restaurant and hotel-operation trade; they perform all menial services.

When it became decided, in Rome or Salerno, that the coastal road would be built, and that a circle road would be built up over the saddle of the peninsula, land values, starting from a goat pasture basis, increased five times, moving nearly all land out of local hands. The roads themselves were not built until years later, nor were they announced much before. Now the giant cranes are erecting villas in series; an immense, half-formed construction is stopped by a dispute as to whether it shall be a hotel or a condominium; the store which supplied local cheese, bread, and olives, has become a supermarket; above on the cape, a giant television transmitter blanks out the screens with its staggering power; the population are nightly fed on *Risk Everything*. Wine, as in Capri, is brought from Puglia; frozen meat from Uruguay; frozen fish come from the motor trawlers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But in the hill towns, at night, the local grape still produces; the sharp hill cheeses hang with the sausages. As October lengthens into November it grows chill on the heights, and the old people, the shepherds come in and fold their faded green umbrellas, keep on their worn felt hats. They have their familiar names, different from their Christian ones: Aniello becomes Mastro Ciccio, Mauro is O Cors'; Paolo becomes Cumpa'pa . . . Ciro becomes Toscan, because when he returned from military service he spoke Italian (Tuscan) not the local dialect. Spaccone, Zilacchio, Moffo, Bon' Uomo . . . Eliseo becomes Mauro Cinese. Their sons wear their hair long, Botticelli style; wear bell-bottoms, shirts with Beatle photo-decals; ride motorbikes from their summer tourist jobs; idle the winter away. Their fathers shake the mud from their heavy shoes, roll their pouch-tobacco into papers, and soon in the uproar, there is the harmonica and a Cilentan *stornello*; a long wavering line of narrative which ends in a declining expanse of wind until all the breath is shaken out of one's lungs; for one cannot break the line apart by taking wind in any part of it:

Domani sera parto, piacendo a Dieeeh . . . eh. . . . eh
Non so domani sera dove me scureeeh . . . eh. . . . eh

The *stornellos* absorb the grape; then a grizzled, stubbled head, grey-whit, face and head seemingly shaven to the same length of stubble, raises itself; it is Cumpa'paolo; beyond seventy, he arises, snapping fingers with the music; sturdy legs, wrapped in shapeless black cloth, raise and stamp; he leaps upward like a goat. A friend joins him, pipe in mouth, black felt hat tilted back on his head; they leap with every force of their tendons; the concertina and harmonica grind away; clapping their hands between their legs, their toes rise upward toward their chins; then comes what was called in burlesque days the bump; this inevitable part of the choreography absorbs them totally; no women are allowed to be in the room. The hill town of Centola crowds around the door of the cellar tavern in the rain; the *vigili* will come to prohibit the noise at ten; but the shepherds, the grape-growers, olive-gatherers, cannot yet be stopped; their legs are used to climbing rocks, are shaped by clinging to the sides of a donkey. Cumpa'pa's grandsons serve tourists in the Club Mediterranée's discotheque bar during the season.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He rides his donkey, Rosina, every morning to his field and feeds her with his carobs, providing her evening fodder. On this ragged land he watches his goats and few sheep. Higher up, his counter-parts have chestnuts, pigs. Cumpa'pa, toothless, hops high as his body pivots erect and his fingers snap below and above and between his legs: flashing, he cries out: "Francisco-Giuseppe, Ciccio Pepe!"—the great event was the 1915-18 war; the mountains of the Adige, the campaigns along the Piave; these are what he remembers; this is why he sings out Francis Joseph as he dances; on his donkey each day, in the summer, he passes the world of the discotheque, the drive-in, and mass vacation fornication.

When he sits, he leans over and grunts out: *"È brutta, la vecchiaia,"* ("old age—it is ugly"); earlier, at Camerota Castello, after he had climbed the castle-rock in the fierce windstorm, higher and quicker than his great-nephews, I had to help him down with both arms step by step; he cannot go downwards, at night, his legs do not function on the down-step, his eyes look down with difficulty. The rough rocky stair-ledges become insuperable hazards, mortal dangers. In the tavern, with the grape, under the lantern, his kicking shanks are made of steel.

The old men, drunk, return to old wives; in the hill towns the homes have been provided with liquid gas stoves; plastered walls and ceilings, paper has been pasted over the protruding beams. Cumpa'pa returns with Toscan, and Zilacchio and O Cors'; with Mastro Ciccio, to the port. He will sleep in a house made new by his sons, where he will have tiled floors and can flush a toilet; where by pressing a button he can produce a hot geyser bath or a shower. In the old days he bathed in the bed of the Lambro when it was not dry; when it was, in the wooden tub which his wife filled with hot water from a kettle, scraping himself with stones.

Winding down the road to the coast, the rain breaks; the moon appears; the promontory of the cape appears below with its shining revolving light, like a three-pronged toy; the hotels are shut; the giant cranes tower silently above their grotesque, half-built, terraced, balconied, wind-holed, cliff-overhung villas, the mass-produced novelties of syndicate architects. The harmonica tries to keep tune, the old men sing sporadically, their bellies

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rumbling with digestion; their eyes are on the lighthouse below. For five years I have not brought them up to the hill and the tarantella, the difficult dance-steps. Now I must leave. Leave them to their properties, their tourists, the closing down of the hill towns and the taverns.

It is the cold rain of November, and I must return to another planet from the parkways that radiate through Italy. I came so early, I bought land; then I left . . . I am for them a link with the past. Now they are richer, and I am poorer, but we cannot arrive at an arrangement: the tavern-owner himself is holding out as long as he can; he too is holding a finger in the dike; he cannot sell the true wine, the cheese, the sausage, at the price his friends can afford.

Other than he, no one will conserve; they are helpless, more and more in the hands of wives and children and children's children. These invite me to TV evenings, and wonder that I, who can afford a car, fill it up with old men to go to the cold, rain-swept hill towns where they are made excited, restless, exhausted, exposed to danger of heart attacks; better the TV, so expensively bought by their children, and then the bed-time. There are too many memories, as of the feast in 1956 when we slaughtered a calf to celebrate my purchase of the land, bought from Cumpa'pa's eldest brother; we provided food and wine and tobacco for forty patriarchs of the village. I was to spend my life with them. But instead the cranes and the autos came. Tomorrow, except for Cumpa'pa, they will be involved with their grown-up children in schemes for next year's season, gas stations and pizzerias; extra floors of rooms raised above their houses to rent by the bed come August. It is time to leave.

Tomorrow is bright sun; I mount the parkway network to Rome. Cumpa'pa has at dawn mounted Rosina and gone to his barren field, in cold November.

I first caught sight of that barren promontary in the early fifties, turning off the road into the fold of the valley; it was in the far distance twenty miles below. The headland where Palinurus, Aeneas' pilot, falling asleep on his oar, fell and drowned, lay humped and low, far under the eyes, distant and curving to the right. The poor road, clinging to the heights, worked downward from Cuccaro; cut off the view, then restored it; the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

brown camelback of the promontory grew slightly larger. The landscape had not been disturbed in a thousand years.

After a while one caught sight of the great rock of the Molpa (owned by a single developer today), with sentinel rocks standing out to sea. The rivers divided to either side behind it; there was a silence as the long hump of the Cape rose from the sea waters, the road working through fields of yellow broom. The sea was wrinkled, full of trails; the heights were as noiseless as if the chimes of a clock had stopped, dangling, untouched, in air. The breeze blew the scents of basil and rosa-marina through the dull-green clumps of olives; young vines rose toward the sun. A donkey moved along the road, riderless; there was an absolute stillness.

The heavy finger of the cape swung horned to the right, in an unresisting sea. Highness and exactitude, harmony and silence; the human figures blank-clothed and perfectly placed; the rhythms of sea and earth, and tamed, timid animals; of insects, and plants and herbal smells, all combined to a ripeness, a fulfillment of ease in which momentum was exhausted. A breathlessness and a coolness, though the sun of late May was clear. The sun was part of the harmony, and turned only slowly above the fields of the sea. Later it was to sink behind the promontory. But for the moment, the fiery planet accepted a guise of motionlessness, and the earth gave up its vapors slowly; the lungs of plants scarcely breathed; the sea scarcely gave off evaporation.

The giant tableau had a life like that of half-forgotten dreams, perceived dimly, intuited through open eyelids. The subconscious, with its affirmations, expanded infinitely into horizons which, for that moment, were stalled.

The motor of the mind re-awoke as the floor of the valley rose; and the view of the peninsula was cut off. The street of the village was visible with its stray houses, a gasoline pump in front of a barber shop, a family hotel; the rocky back, shaking all its lines downward into reflections of the sea, rose vertically out of the blue, coming up as if from mirrors, with an arched opening in the brown rock where a sea grotto pierced it. The people stood in small groups around a bar; the activity seemed to consist of walking back and forth to the port; setting out nets in evening, taking them in in the morning.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Goat-boys roamed the cliffs with their reed-flutes; ears grew pointed, wandering in and out of caves in the limestone; they had not yet heard of Milan, or Dusseldorf or Hamburg, where they were destined to cough out their lives in the smoke and dirt of throbbing factory quarters.

At night those expert with the trident, of instantaneous eye and wrist, roamed the shoals in skiffs, spearing the dazzled eyes of the octopus. The moon rose; there were no roads; the long broken gravelled stretches of the approach came down from the provincial road at Cuccaro, carts staggering in difficult ruts; donkeys and unbudging swarms of hobbling goats. The railway tunnel opened in a deep gorge far beneath and behind the hill town of Centola; twice a day the slowest local train stopped; a weary bus, a single taxi, struggled up for the two hour run to the sea, up over the high crest of the hill-town.

At the end of the world, at Finis Terrae, high rocks rose from the sea: the grey protruberance of the sentinel rock of the Mingardo, with its low grotto; the brown thumb of the Coniglio; the great gray-brown sheer face of the Molpa, on top of which was a Greek settlement; behind rose the sharp mountains of Monte Bulgheria, among which lay Licusati in its olive valley, dominated by Camerota castle. The cape of Palinurus, with sheer faces of grottoed limestone dropping into the sea, pointed north and as the light fell away to a dull pink, the flashing eye took up its stiff-armed triple swinging, reaching thirty miles out and around the compass, the arms of light picking out individual Saracen towers along the Caprioli coast. The descending line of the limestone ridge, with black lava outcrops in the sea, along the Mingardo, faded into blackness; in the port the giant eye, flashing close above, dominated the beached or anchored boats; already Ciccio, and the other trident-spearers, had turned up their lamps and glided like water-bugs over the shallows, transfixing octopi; Ciccio's eight-year-old son handled the oars. You could go out with him and live with the lapping of the waters; directly above you the halo of yellow lamplight drowned out the stars.

At night, with the gleams of the torches, there was a reflection of high slopes on quivering waters; a distance swept by stabbing swathes of the white light above; the hill towns had been put

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to sleep, and Sanseverina, a ruined castle above the entrance to Mingardo gorge, still had glass in a few of its windows; there was a grass path going up the hillside, some old people were still living there; glass glittered in the starlight. . . .

Time has lurched forward; now the squat temples of Paestum raise their plump columns in the brilliant November air. One can study again, and in complete silence, the pale red-brown paintings with their blue coverlets and striped cushions; it is the Tomb of the Diver. One lute has the tortoiseshell body, but is extremely archaic; it is tuned by pieces of ox-hide being twisted around the top of the frame. Another is a conventional Attic one, with tuning keys set on an ivory crest connecting the arms. Fragments of tortoiseshell were found in the tomb, along with some metallic substances; the bones had long since been dissipated in dust. The symposiast has taken his leave, and left music and wine behind, escorted by the pale girl with the flute; passing the couches of lovers, he has moved into infinity; he will take the dive.

For the Leucadian one, traditionally, to determine guilt or innocence, boats were waiting, and live birds and cloth wings were available, to brake the descent. No such auxiliaries are furnished here. The deceased's fragile, smoothly-shaped tastes create a world in the interior of the tomb. His sufferings, on departure, must have been restrained; there can be no other tomb, no other paintings, by a Greek; this is an élan which spans twenty-five centuries.

He winds around six couches, and then passes outward through a ritual hole made in the left hand corner of the lid; passing into the crude, shatterable porous limestone of the rock on which the temples are built.

"Pavesini" glitter the signs on the parkway; the biscuit monopoly raises its cantilevered restaurant and supermarket bon-bon shop over the width of the highway, with a hotel as well. Drugged by distance, by curves and viaducts, one arrives at Montecassino at sunset; at the top the monks have left the door open; the Bramante cloister and the Sangallo cloister gleam in gold stone, leading into the cavern of the Baroque church, were marbles and gilt are scarce visible in the darkness. Parading sound before the vast view, a monk in the entrance cloister plays Schumann on a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

declaratory pianoforte, poising haltingly over the difficult passages, the barbarous fingering, the ascending tenths. Only the abbot was there on 15th February, 1944, with a few monks who had remained after the evacuation; a few hundreds of villagers, women and children. The bombs, gifts from Pennsylvania, destroyed it utterly.

The bombing, serving no cause, was a ritual act; a vehemence of brass thoughts, coming from beneath brass hats. The east breeds its commissars; the west its generals; they are selected by some strange process of myth and incantation, put through a pretense of formal schooling, and then released upon the world.

The brass thoughts remain in brass, beneath brass lids, basilisk eyes.

Godless Navona thrusts its naked flesh into the sparkling November nights; it has been won back from the automobile, over speculator opposition; here even motorists become pedestrians. The heart of the old city is silent after midnight. The façade of the Farnese lifts itself above its fountain tubs, traffic-free; behind the palace, one peers through at the flawless French pelouses of the lawns; the overhead arched bridge, planned to connect with the rural Villa across the Tiber, drips its vines down to the paving. In Navona Domitian's architect, that of the Pamphilj, Bernini, and Borromini, those of the Lancellotti and the Braschi, are caught in a reverberance that gives courtesy to space, so that it is free to resonate, like the old concert-halls, with their acoustics, built before the days of the science of sound; their superb tone is a result of accident, the result of the settling of stone and cement into a pattern willed by the nature of time, by the enclosure of the area itself; by the elapse of bursts of polyphony and counterpoint.

In the Palazzo Borghese one lunches in the gilded rooms of the seventeenth century, beneath overhanging ceiling murals in the style of Veronese; surrounding the court are the antique columns salvaged from old St. Peter's which witnessed the coronation of Charlemagne. In Rome's most hallowed club the princes and the dukes, served by Figaro in black kneebreeches, are given their pills, then watch the soccer matches in a small silk-lined salon decorated for Pauline Bonaparte. A nephew of Pius XII is a recent acquisition; somewhat earlier is the line

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the nephews of Leo XIII. Emerging, one sees in the narrow distance the high obelisk and towers of Trinità dei Monti, far above the steps in the twilight, glowing and receding. The scenographic quality of Rome, compared to which Paris is heavy, and London deliberately bedecked, overwhelms.

The Indonesian consulate lurks in a corner of the tourist quarter; here though the lone secretary is Italian, one steps back into the Asia one has forgotten; the routine tourist visa will take five days. The consul is Central Javanese, an example of the high polish, the perfect pitch, the gentle culture with which this ancient race fulfills its duties. The Javanese contrast with the Sumatran Bataks (cannibals until 1850) and Minangkabau, who are dominant in commercial activity. The courtesy, the easy elegance of the Javanese is compared to the cruder ways of the enormous out-islands, Sumatra, Borneo and Celebes, to Javanese eyes not yet won from the jungle; *orang-utan* (jungle man) is the term of disfavor; though sometimes Batak-Batak is used for all out-island inhabitants. When these achieve wealth through industry and trade they parade enormous American autos and adopt Miami life-styles and folkways.

The Javanese, erect and ascetic in his court costume, mindful of the etiquette of Sultan's palaces, looks on, as his minute tract of rice-field is fractioned with each successive generation. The multiple levels of the intricate palace language (as distinct from Malay, Batak or Minangkabau) ingratiate the ears; after a paralyzed communion with deserted Navona, on the coldest and brightest of November nights, a last glimpse of the Farnese, I leave an eyrie above the dome of the Pantheon and in a seat aboard the national airline I find I am lucky: all around are Javanese, babbling delightedly; Bataks and Minangkabau, even the well-loved Sundanese, are in the front and the back of the plane. I had forgotten there were so many Javanese, if you include with them the Sundanese, so many that anywhere the tribes must remain a minority to this most civilized of Asia's peoples, a gentle animism still prevailing through thin later veneers of Hinduism and perfunctory Muslim conformism.

We are conversing on all the levels, and I feign not to understand Malay when it is spoken on the address system; ask for a translation into *kromo kasar* (child-level Javanese) and they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bubble with delight. They quickly find the faults in one's education: I am instructed in the Javanese calendar; worse, I have never learned the Pasarán: the five-day market calendar. They bristle with lore, recondite. They cannot understand my liking for Bali. Sumatrans holiday there; it is "different"; Javanese never, it is "like," but so much less sophisticated they are bored; the people there too are of Polynesian blood, physically coarser, bigger, darker and curly-haired. They sniff.

At Karachi the dry heat of night shocks a body used to the cold of Europe; the dry and precise English of the shopkeepers startles the Javanese; the fierce literalism of the Muslim beliefs. In Bangkok it is day and we move into the hot dampness of southeast Asia; the Chinese girls at the counters respond dully and disagreeably; the deadness and exhausted quality of this outpost of U. S. power, its generals and field-marshals closely linked with our own, is re-evoked.

Singapore is heavy with rain, gardened, spotlessly hygienic. Here I disembark, leaving the Javanese happily waving; there is no connection out of Djakarta in the afternoon. The capital of the Chinese commercial empire curves its new superhighways, and rises higher and higher in reinforced concrete. A Miami hotel-building wave engulfs the Orchard district; the latest boasts a glass-stalactite lobby ceiling done in Tokyo, and four cafe-restaurants, with four different types of International Entertainment. A Ceylonese friend rushes up; turning pale he begs me not to report his tall and austere eighteen-year old companion to his wife. Though the cafes are full, the rooms are empty; unbelievably, the Chinese, used only to merchandising and wholesaling, have made a miscalculation: they have borrowed, all of them, to raise hotels on the basis of tourist projections which will not come true for ten years; there are no beaches, no monuments in Singapore; shopping, as in Hong Kong, is at best good for two nights.

Retail prices rise slightly in the stores of the downtown area to adjust for the losses on the hotels; but keep just below the level of Hong Kong, which has heavier municipal expenses and a difficult hinterland, a more expensive food and water supply. For the money at the top of their pyramid, unsecured

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

except by the cutting of the throat, the Chinese pay each other 3% a month; the same rate as for film producing, or building up inventory. Underlying first mortgages are 1% a month. But tourists will not sleep in Singapore.

In Bali, an Australian Consortium has announced a $9 million skyscraper Casino; floors below will provide three-hundred hotel rooms for the gambling tables, which are "intended for U.S.A. tourists, but affluent Indonesians are also allowed to frequent the Casino." The company proclaims this to be the first Casino in the southern Pacific; incautiously, it admits that negotiations with "American investors" are going on. Las Vegas and its Syndicate will shine brilliantly in the night, ten floors above the beach, brittle balls whirling, dice tumbling, bars flowing, bands blaring. If there was one place in the world where a superhighway should not have been built, it was the path to Punta Carena in Anacapri; if there is one place in the world where a Casino should not be built. . . .

Though Abu Simbel and Venice have been "saved," nothing can be done for Bali. Las Vegas can be permitted to arrive, simply because no physical monuments are involved. From Abu Simbel and Venice the ambient culture and the life have long since departed; in Bali they still remain.

Hotel rooms must be kept filled. The curved rectangle of the American hotel at Sanur, where Spiro Agnew played, and Bebe Rebozo has yet to cavort, is half-empty, except for the New Years's-Easter period of the heaviest rains, from which Dusseldorf and Grosse Pointe take away bad impressions, to be repeated at home; they don't like looking out at villages through the windshield-wipers of cars, getting their clothes soaked as they are ushered beneath the *porte-cochères* of expensive shops; the wind changes and the rain sweeps in on their sides, under the deferentially-held umbrellas. Most are content to sit in the Musak lobby, touring the hotel shopping arcade, having their hair done, waiting for the new movie flown in from the States; changing into white tuxedos and floor-length gowns for the Bali Hai Supper Club evening glamor, a rock group plus sedate dance band.

If it were not raining, if the lights were all turned off, they might be able to see over to Nusa Lembong and Nusa Penida, across the strait of Badung, where every night the *leyaks,* witches

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who, like vampires, live near graveyards, seek out the unwary, sucking the blood of sleepers, and eating the entrails of unborn children. The frail outriggers, with the blackened thin bodies bending at the paddles, strain to cross the five-hour Strait, in the rain, bearing wicker baskets each with a fat hog for the hotel's "Bali Night" barbecues, these perforce held indoors in the season of the rich.

The Nusa Lembong, Nusa Penida boatmen huddle drenched in their coconut-straw huts on the strand beneath, as the strains of a genteel version of the Beatles, or nostalgic Guy Lombardo à la Agnew escape from the supper club shining 150 feet in the swirling mists above them; there Dusseldorf waddles arm-in-arm with Hamburg, and Milan with Goteborg, Bronxville and Beverly Hills; all is well. During this season, crossing with them, one must sleep on Nusa Lembong; Sampalan and Nusa Penida are too difficult to reach. We hug the shore of Badung Strait until the outrigger stands off Klungkung and the Kusamba strand; then, waiting for a break in the rain, we dash for Djumutbatu, on Nusa Lembong, paddles flying; I have the task of bailing.

On my first trip, arriving at Djumutbatu, I made the sign of the leyak, closing the third and fourth fingers into the palm of the hand, with the thumb and the index and fifth fingers extended, the sign also of Djero Gede Metjaling, the black-tusked monster, who with his consort, Djero Luh, came from Nusa Penida to haunt and terrorize the shores where the Las Vegas Casino is to be built. The children fled; I was warned that an attempt might be made on my life as I slept, by courtesy, in the Bale shed of the village Bandjar.

Further south, at Deso Lembongan, I was taken to a labryrinth of descending chambers hollowed out in the friable volcanic gravel, dimly lit from openings above on the surface; flowers were stuck in the masks of the lion and the fanged wild boar. In a corner a cloth was lifted, and the queen of the witches spat out her long narrow tongue, dripping red flame. The clouds opened, there was a tearing in the sky, and the tunnels were awash; the torrent cascaded through, capturing gravel from the soft sides, draining below, hissing fiercely and wildly.

The shores of Nusa Penida and Nusa Lembong are full of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Butas and Kalas at night, lesser demon-spirits. Since the masks of the good spirits, the barongs, were kept in the Bale, I was able to return in the bright weather, at dawn, with the hogs, saved from the witches, with whom I had identified myself when I made the leyak sign.

The French tourists are shunted to Tahiti by their national airline; other nationalities get Bali as a side trip from Singapore. The American package-tour line has always been Waikiki—Tokyo —Hong Kong—Bangkok—New Delhi (Taj Mahal)—Teheran; the problem for the speculators is to get them south of this; but shopping in Singapore is no different from Hong Kong. Plans for a Tokyo—Bali—Singapore—Colombo route have so far collapsed on the heavy hotel investment in Hong Kong and Bangkok. As newcomers, the Singapore Chinese have seen their ship founder against the established profits of the traditional route. But now, unforeseen help is coming from Las Vegas.

Next day the plane drops into Djakarta; I watch the pathetic appeal, in front of the city hall, of the cycle-rickshaw drivers. The Chinese owners are bringing in four-passenger motorized rickshaws from Japan. There are 200,000 one-to-two passenger cycle-rickshaws in Djakarta, and each rickshaw supports four drivers; thus four families. Further, the Javanese family, particularly in the distant countryside where the drivers live, a great many going and returning as far as Tjirebon, 180 miles distant, for a period of days, is usually large. It often includes one or more parents, sisters and younger brothers, as well as the immediate family; therefore the Javanese family cannot be reckoned at less than five members. Each cycle-rickshaw feeds twenty people. The magnitude of the problem can be suggested by the fact that four million people are threatened with at best severe malnutrition from the introduction of the Japanese device by the Chinese proprietors; 600 motor-rickshaws have so far arrived from Japan and are awaiting license, a mere prelude. One motor rickshaw replaces eight to ten cycle-rickshaws; thus, when this introductory batch is licensed, a minimum of 20,000 families, or 100,000 people, spread out in the Javanese countryside, will face malnutrition because of the 600 vehicles.

One has to have lived in Asia for a number of years to be aware of the callous nature of the Chinese where profit is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concerned. They are abacuses, calculating machines. To them, other races are to be used for gain, and their destiny is of no concern; to the Chinese they are useful only insofar as he can make a profit out of them. In shops and warehouses non-Chinese employees fall sick at their own expense; when they return, their places have often been taken by others.

The Chinese owners work in concert with the Japanese manufacturers, who are, or course, bloodless. The Japanese carried off 270,000 Javanese slave-laborers (called *romusha*); few of these ever returned from the death-jungles of Indo-china; with a shortage of medicines for the heroes of the Imperial Army, medical supplies were not wasted on members of a subhuman group, officially identified by the Imperial authorities as an ethnically *inferior, subject race. Whole areas of Java were depopulated.* The same elements remain in power in Imperial Japan today; the lash and the death-camp have been replaced by economic colonialism of the type exemplified by the motor rickshaws; the myth of the "good" Hirohito versus the "bad" Imperial Army is the latest of the stratagems imposed by the Japanese ruling group on a gullible America.

In Djakarta humane, enlightened, western-educated elements in the Trade Ministry of the Federal Government are fully aware of the need for (as the fashionable Gunnar Myrdal jargon goes) "labor-intensive" use of capital. And there have been urgent appeals from health authorities, on the grounds that the small Japanese rickshaw motor is notorious for incomplete combustion of fuel, and in fact is an almost perfect generator of noxious gases, corroding the eyes and lungs; already the auto and motorbike smog of Djakarta approaches Singapore levels.

With the economic survival of four million people at stake, what the Djakarta Chinese may be heading for is an incident like that in East Lombok on the night of September 30th, 1965, when every Chinese man, woman, and child had their throats cut. Yet the Chinese are incapable of taking recent and total political lessons: in Tjakranegara in West Lombok, where their lives were spared, they are behaving today as they did before September, 1965. The *tauké-tauké* (as the Chinese owners are called) may face a bitter and brutal final choice: either a return to China (Singapore cannot receive them; other coun-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tires, which have the same problem, will not), or a series of East Lombok incidents. To one who knows the pacific nature of the peoples of Java, Bali and the islands stretching out to the east, it is unbelievable when one senses their hatred of even the smallest Chinese tauké, his habitual seduction of adolescent girl servants (called *babus*), his moneylending, his gouging, his exclusiveness, his superiority; his refusal even to walk,much less perform any physical labor. the Djakarta Chinese were the pets of both the Dutch and the late Soekarno regime, when they reached the peak of their power. They have little standing today; they are a tiny numerical minority. In collusion with the Japanese colonialist manufacturers, they are at this moment actively attempting to take the food from the mouth of four million people....

I board another plane and in a moment am above the volcanoes of Merbabu and Merapi. I drop down among Buddhist stupas and Hindu goparams as the American jet is wrenched to a stop by full braking force; a bamboo-sided ox-cart, a *gerobag*, lumbers by the airport gate. It moves on silently to a village compound, in the rice fields. The Javanese music, the flutes, the whining rebabs, the gamelan gongs, the shrill voices, drown out Europe. It is raining softly and four young girls with rice-powdered faces, in gold brocade, wearing batik in court patterns, take up the steps. Actors take up the postures and accents of puppets, and imitate their two-dimensional gestures from the shadow figures cut out of uncured buffalo-hide. They wear the crowns and the wings of divine beings.

Then come the comedians, Semar, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong. Their rice-powdered faces have each a strongly trenchant character. They are grotesquely out of place among the heroes and gods of the palaces and deep volcano-crowned forests in which their buffoonery has to take place, but they must comment, at leisure, on the action around them. This is their right; this may take all night.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RICHARD PEVEAR

The Killing of Orpheus

When the maenads murdered and dismembered Orpheus
Because he refused their god and preached Helios
Apollo from the Thracian hill, and spoke
Against ritual killing

(Legend says the god set them on at the temple
In Deium, Macedonia: their husbands inside,
They seized weapons, entered, slaughtered the men,
And turned on the singer)

His limbs were scattered, but they threw his head
Into the river Hebrus, and as it drifted down
The long stream, through mountainous country, uncut
Cedars and hemlocks,

Sheer outcrops, thickets tangled with ivy,
Banks where the blue-flag iris blossomed,
Where moss-deer shadowed the water, the head of
Orpheus, singing

Towards Lesbos, held out in a crystal moment
All that he was: his song recounted
Animal enchantments, the inward life-force
Of trees and fountains,

The sweetness of the flesh, the stunned silence
Of the gods of death, the impossible consent,
The steep return, the bitter struggle with
Himself and the negative

Pull back down from the sun-filled cave-mouth
To eternal darkness. The flowing water
Was transparent as his song, and although it took him
Into unknown country,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Alter times, though it threatened to silence
His forecast on disenchanted rocks, Orpheus
Sang because he was song, and his music was
Glamorous, charming,

Unreflective as the cedars and hemlocks, the sheer
Outcrops drenched in sunlight, the banks
Where the blue-flag iris blossoms and moss-deer
Shadow the water.

Mnemosyne

In the quiet afternoon
The birds still sing, for them there is no
Catastrophe. Thinking of you
I see the faces of hot-house flowers
Staring through glass at the frozen world.

All those faces are yours, you are crowded
Like history, but unlike history you look for
Moments of stillness, and as time pulls forward
You pull back.
What you love is the grass springing out in the morning,
The night and its stars.

Because we are your flesh, our condition
Is suffering for you.
We act in the world that was young once but
Our souls drift out on the dark river
Fateless, uncollected
And go down.

Only you will be able to tell our story
Not for us but perhaps
In the place we have left behind, our homeland
Still in the light of your unappearance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Little Acmeist Elegy

Gone under snow
The hillside, its young green, its dry
Blond curls of summer, flowers under sky
Of the apple trees, driven below.

Snowdrifts. A blast of wind breaks
Across the black water, the hulking animal
Storm, blind in its dead weight, takes
All day to fall.

But then at night the watcher sees
A last change under the eye
Of the moon, under stars that nudge into the sky
Like white hibernal bees.

Waiting

Suspended animation—
Between heartbeat and heartbeat.
A polar bear like a frozen breath
Curled up in the snow, asleep.
Between the no longer and the not yet,
Dust motionless
In sunlight caught in a window,
Bellini's St. Francis
About to receive the stigmata.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROGER SALE

L. Frank Baum, and Oz

In 1900 Lyman Frank Baum was forty-four. Before this he had kept himself busy with a huge range of jobs and hobbies: editor and printer of an amateur magazine, *Rose Lawn Home Journal,* Rose Lawn being his parent's home in Chittenango, N.Y.; reporter for the *New York World;* printer for *New Era,* in Bradford, Pa.; manager of a string of vaudeville houses in New York and Pennsylvania; author, writer, composer, and director of Irish musical comedies and melodramas; operator of a variety store and editor of a weekly newspaper in Aberdeen, S.D.; traveling salesman in the midwest for a Chicago firm importing china and glassware; editor of *Shop Window,* a monthly for window trimmers; author of a number of children's books, *Mother Goose in Prose, Father Goose His Book,* and *A New Wonderland,* and of two technical books, *The Book of the Hamburgs, a brief treatise upon the mating, rearing and management of the different varieties of Hamburgs* and *The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows and Interiors.*

It is all pure and splendid Horatio Alger America. Baum seems to have enjoyed almost total mobility of body and spirit, and whatever made him a success or a failure at any one thing seems to have had little bearing on what he did next. Not rootless, not a gypsy, but a man with a large family that he loved, a man apparently at home anywhere, or as much at home in one place as another. Baum had a knack for both making and losing money, and, as a probable reason for this knack, of gaining and losing interest quickly. As one would expect, almost all reports of his personality speak of his charm, pleasantness, energy, and easy ability to get along with others. In short, Baum was like Willy Loman, inventive and, given the type, hugely talented; but Willy Loman nonetheless. One is as much at a loss to explain his successes as his failures, though of course the real task is to catch the successes and the failures in a single focus.

In 1900, as one of four books Baum published that year, came

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. Unlike a number of his apparently unpromising ventures, this one had difficulty finding a publisher even though *Father Goose His Book* had enjoyed a considerable success. *The Wizard* was published by a small Chicago firm, George W. Hill, only after Baum and his illustrator, W. W. Denslow, agreed to absorb the printing costs. It was a great success from the beginning—one commentary says that "before the end of the year it had become the fastest selling children's book in America."[1] And that, if we follow one set of notions about Horatio Alger's America, should have been that. Baum should have realized that he had happened upon an idea that could make him rich forever. He had always thought along lines of what would sell, and it would have been easy to rework and repackage the formula of Dorothy Gale and the Land of Oz and make a fortune. Part of Baum tried to do exactly that. When *The Wizard* was turned into a musical show two years later, Baum's book and lyrics were greatly changed by the producer, Julian Mitchell—Dorothy's pet dog becomes a cow, and she is given a prince to fall in love with. At first Baum was angry, but he subsided when the show became an enormous success: "The people will have what pleases them, and not what the author happens to favor, and I believe that one of the reasons why Julian Mitchell is recognized as a great producer is that he faithfully tries to serve the great mass of playgoers." At this and all other points in his career Baum seems to have been respectful of whatever would go over well.

But for all he was Alger's contemporary in many ways, Alger Baum was not. He was too restless, to little able to calculate or even to care about the future. Regardless of the great success of *The Wizard* and of the patent desire of his readers for more of the same, Baum did not want just to go on writing Oz books. He did give up editing the window dresser's magazine in 1902 to devote his full time to writing children's books, but he wrote *Dot and Tot in Merryland, The Master Key* (science fiction about electricity), *Baum's American Fairy Tales, The Life and Adven-*

[1] I have taken all biographical and bibliographical details from two sources: Martin Gardner, "The Royal Historian of Oz," in *The Wizard of Oz and Who He Was,* by Gardner and Russell B. Nye (East Lansing, 1957), and "Lyman Frank Baum: A Chronological Checklist for his Published Writings," *The Baum Bugle,* X (Spring, 1966), pp. 15-18. For the latter I am grateful to Fred Meyer, secretary of the International Wizard of Oz Club.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tures of Santa Claus, and *The Enchanted Isle of Yew,* before he consented to do another Oz book, *The Marvelous Land of Oz* in 1904, and it was three years and half a dozen books later still before he did a third, *Ozma of Oz,* in 1907. Three years after that, at the end of the sixth Oz book, *The Emerald City,* Baum tried to get out of writing any more by announcing that communication between Oz and the outside world had been cut off permanently, but by that time the pressure of the success of the Oz books was too strong for him, and he was trapped. He had to invent a fancy wireless set-up between Oz and America so news of Oz could be given him by Dorothy as tapped out by the Shaggy Man, and he then resigned himself to doing an Oz book a year, though in fact he ended up doing more than that. The seventh in the series, *The Patchwork Girl,* came out in 1913, and the fourteenth, *Glinda,* was published shortly after he died six years later.

Even after agreeing to be saddled with the Oz books permanently, however, Baum refused to stop there. He wrote other fantasies—*John Dough and the Cherub, Sky Island, Sea Fairies, Queen Zixi of Ix;* he wrote three adult romances under the name of Schuyler Staunton, two boy's books as "Captain Hugh Fitzgerald," six more written as "Floyd Akers," seventeen girl's books as "Edith Van Dyne," and a novel about some friends as "John Estes Cooke." So, on the one hand, Baum is the author of the Oz books. It is as such that he has been best known ever since *The Wizard,* and it has only been recently that anything he wrote other than Oz books has been brought back into print.[2] Quite obviously, most of the others should and will remain known only to collectors. But on the other hand Baum could never settle into just one role, and until we understand the way he loved and hated writing Oz books we will not be able to get used to or to account for the great deal of slapdash, careless, and silly writing that mars and even destroys some of the Oz books. More important, we need to see the loving related to the hating, the defects related to the

[2] The Oz books have been kept in print continuously since their first publication by Reilly & Lee, though the quality of the paper and illustrations has gradually declined; recently this firm re-issued *Sea Fairies* and *Sky Island.* Exposition Press has brought out *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus,* and Dover has paperback editions of *The Magical Monarch of Mo and Queen Zixi of Ix.* Presumably more will appear as copyrights are allowed to lapse. Anyone who cares, though, is advised to hunt for the original editions, with their vastly superior and often lavish illustrations.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

successes that have gained and that kept for Baum a permanent place in the minds of those who love him.

Our land is an enchanted land, and much of what has been written about American literature has tried to find the right way to describe the spell it lies under. It is one thing, though, to try to learn the "Sesame" that will unlock the enchantment; many who have tried and even partially succeeded are themselves rather pedestrian; it is quite another thing to respond to the enchantment by being oneself enchanting. *Walden* is perhaps our one major example of an enchanting book, the one place where we can wholeheartedly begin to believe in possibilities we ordinarily deny, where we can be convinced that life could be far more enchanting, gay, inventive, and delightful than it usually is. Thoreau does this not by talking about "America" after the fashion of Whitman, but by being immersed in when and where he is, by being unselfconscious, by delighting in the morning, in the change of seasons, in how much he can get along without; the part of Thoreau that was indeed concerned and even despairing about America is not enchanting in this way at all.

The Baum books are like this too. At the opening of both *The Wizard* and *The Emerald City* are short passages about the emptiness of the Great Plains and the wearying poverty of life there, at the beginning of *Sky Island* are some nice touches about going west and reaching the Pacific, but mostly, when Baum is writing explicitly about the United States, he falls into the very boring pose of a knowing satirist—of monarchies, or feminists, or the over-educated, all from the standpoint of an unreflective populism. Yet, like Thoreau, when Baum is at his best he is both responding to the enchantment of America and being enchanting as well. His major way of achieving this is by describing the journey of a child to a magic country; but the best way to approach this subject is somewhat indirectly, by considering the adult Americans in his books who also take this same journey, and by seeing why Baum never succeeds with them as he does with his children.

The most famous of these men is the Wizard himself, but there are also the Shaggy Man and Cap'n Bill: older men, all of them, dry and sexless, in the company of a young heroine whom they must protect with the American practical wisdom that is their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chief trait. The rule about these figures is that the less you see of them the better they seem. The humbug wizard in the first book, mild, squat, and pathetic, is rather memorable because he only appears in a few chapters, and exists there mainly as the focus of others' discoveries about him. In later books he appears more frequently, mostly as Dorothy's companion on journeys, and gradually he becomes more prissy, more an adjunct to the kindly, strong magic wielded by Glinda and Ozma. Cap'n Bill has a wooden leg, but otherwise he is hard to tell from the Wizard. The Shaggy Man is occasionally better, when he is embodying the shrewd restlessness of Baum himself that was responsible for getting the Wizard up in his balloon in the first place. The truth expressed by these men is that it is easy if you know how—how to lie to Dorothy about where the Love Magnet came from, how to catch the heads of the Scoodlers as though they were baseballs, how to whistle along that portion of the Yellow Brick Road where the plants will reach over and capture non-whistlers. But because they are effective characters only when performing this sort of trick, they are good mostly in short bursts. As a result, much the best of these types is a character named Johnny Dooit, who appears only in six pages of one book, *The Road to Oz,* when the Shaggy Man calls on him to convey his party across the Deadly Desert:

> Johnny Dooit puffed his pipe and looked carefully at the dreadful desert in front of them—stretching so far away they could not see its end.
>
> "You must ride," he said, briskly.
>
> "What in?" asked the shaggy man.
>
> "In a sand-boat." [*The Road to Oz* (Chicago, 1909), p. 133]

It's as simple as that if you have whiskers and a pipe and puff a little.

> "But where is the sand-boat?" asked the shaggy man, looking all around him.
>
> "I'll make you one," said Johnny Dooit.

On the opposite page is one of those fine John R. Neill drawings that you have to look at twice just to know what's being drawn; it is Johnny Dooit, but only his very slim posterior, slim legs, and one arm carrying a hammer appear above his copper chest, into which he has plunged to find what he needs to make the sand

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boat. Two trees provide all the wood he needs, and, working miraculously fast, he makes his boat, mast, and sail. As he finishes:

> "It ought to be painted," said Johnny Dooit, tossing his tools back into the chest, "for that would make it look prettier. But 'though I can paint it for you in three seconds it would take an hour to dry, and that's a waste of time." (pp. 135-136)

With a typical American bow to aesthetics, Johnny sees no reason to waste time. Then comes the question of how the thing works:

> "Did you ever sail a ship?"
> "I've seen one sailed," said the shaggy man.
> "Good. Sail this boat the way you've seen a ship sailed, and you'll be across the sands before you know it."
> With this he slammed down the lid of the chest, and the noise made them all wink. While they were winking the workman disappeared, tools and all. (p. 136)

Johnny Dooit, not Oz the Great and Terrible, is an American wizard—just sail this boat the way you've seen one sailed. That's all it takes, and it is what all Baum's American men aspire to, and it is impressive; but it helps that he then does disappear.

There is no necessary reason, however, why the enchantment need be as brief as it is here. Baum's American wizards have their practical magic, but what that magic gives them is a presence, a sense of knowing what to do. They can for a moment or two fill up a scene as though it were all there was, as though there were no past or future, and it is that, really, that is enchanting. That it is the presence and not the practical expertise that counts here is what the really enchanting Oz figures, Dorothy Gale and Tip and the other children, show us. They can't build boats in two minutes, or know that one must whistle when going past the encircling trees; they must rely on their native sense of themselves and let that be enough, and the fact that what is magical and most American about them is their spirit and not their knowledge gives us the clue to Baum's achievement. Their ability not to fuss tells us not about the wonders of practical wisdom but about the possibilities of life; their immersion in the present and their unconcern about past and future is what makes them children, to be sure, but also what makes them very important. We are inclined to think that Baum works better with girls than with boys, but Baum is in fact an almost totally sexless author

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and our impression is created by Dorothy alone. The other girls, Betsy Bobbin and Trot, have nothing like Dorothy's stature, and three of the boys, Tip, Inga, and Ervic, have some very impressive moments. But it is nonetheless Dorothy who is most memorable, so a good look at one of her magical journeys should help us to describe what is most enchanting about Baum.

At the opening of *Ozma,* Dorothy and her Uncle Henry are on a ship bound for Australia, and a storm comes up. The captain is not alarmed but advises everyone to stay below; but Dorothy has been dozing while the message is being delivered, and so, when she wakes and does not find her uncle, she goes on deck. She sees a man who might be Uncle Henry clinging to a mast and rushes toward him, but gets no closer than a chicken coop lying on the deck when the storm doubles its force and she is hurled from that boat, holding on to the coop:

> She kept tight hold of the stout slats and as soon as she could get the water out of her eyes she saw that the wind had ripped the cover from the coop, and the poor chickens were fluttering away in every direction, being blown by the wind until they looked like feather dusters without handles. [*Ozma of Oz* (Chicago, 1907), p. 19]

The storm is not so much a storm as an event that creates situations and problems and oddities. A moment later Dorothy climbs into the coop:

> "Well, I declare," she exclaimed with a laugh. "You're in a pretty fix, Dorothy Gale, I can tell you! and I haven't the least idea how you're going to get out of it." (p. 20)

Baum and Dorothy are both surprised, but not excited. If you go off for Australia you can get caught in a storm, and if you get caught in a storm you are liable to be blown over board and end up in a pretty fix.

When the wind dies Dorothy sleeps on the floor of the coop, and in the morning she discovers one remaining hen at the far end. The hen has just laid an egg, and she and Dorothy start a conversation. After a minute or two Dorothy says to herself:

> "If we were in the Land of Oz, I wouldn't think it so queer, because many of the animals can talk in that fairy country. But out here in the ocean must be a good long way from Oz." (p. 26)

Indeed the ocean is a long way from Oz, and a long way from

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kansas, too, where she started from. Just as one expects animals to talk in Oz and not to talk in Kansas, so one isn't sure what to expect on the ocean. So the two begin discussing the hen's grammar, which turns out to be rather like Dorothy's, and after a while the coop lands on a sandy beach. They find a key, and an admonitory inscription to BEWARE THE WHEELERS, in the sand. Both are hungry, and they have a long conversation about whether it is better to eat live things, like bugs, or cooked dead things, like chickens who have eaten bugs. The hen seems to get the better of this, and she also gets her bugs, but Dorothy does even better when she finds a grove of treees on which grow lunch and dinner pails, all filled with food. The Wheelers appear, gaudily dressed and a little frightening, claiming to own the pails, so Dorothy flees to a hill of rocks on which the Wheelers cannot wheel. Wandering around, she finds a door with a keyhole, so she tries the key she found on the beach, and it works. Inside is a mechanical man named Tik-Tok, and though he turns out to be "magic," his makers are Johnny Dooits named Smith and Tinker, American mechanical geniuses.

What is so enthralling about all this is the instinctive rightness of Baum's talent; he moves, totally without self-consciousness, from a real world to an improbable world to a magic world. The sentences come easily, and imply they were no harder to write than it would be to take the journey they describe. Dorothy herself has no tricks or mechanical skills, but she commands a large presence just by responding and accepting each new detail with the same unshakable curiosity with which she faced the last. We do not classify each situation according to how realistic or magical it is because Dorothy and Baum do not; instead, they take each one as it comes since, as we have always known and are being shown afresh, that is the way to get out of pretty fixes. At night people go to sleep, in the dark they look for light, in the morning they search for food, when a door appears in a rock you look for a key, when you find a disused mechanical man you wind him up. It is precisely the atmosphere of Baum's writing not to be atmospheric, or faerie, or invoking, or mysterious—or European, which is why, one suspects, most Europeans find it difficult to see anything enchanting in Baum. He genuinely accepts Dorothy and never is busy creating a storyteller's manner

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that is any different from hers. That way he can imply what is quite obviously true: he could do no better at taking these journeys than she does.

Some time after meeting Tik-Tok, Dorothy and the hen meet Princess Langwidere of the Land of Ev, who turns out to be the owner of the lunch and dinner pails claimed by the Wheelers, and who, more importantly, has a collection of thirty heads she can put on and take off as she pleases. The conversation between the Princess and Dorothy is a fine example of Baum's way of merging everything into the dramatic present:

> "You are rather attractive," said the lady presently. "Not at all beautiful, you understand, but you have a certain style of prettiness that is different from any of my thirty heads. So I believe I'll take your head and give you No. 26 for it."
>
> "Well, I believe you won't!" exclaimed Dorothy.
>
> "It will do you no good to refuse," continued the Princess, "for I need your head for my collection, and in the land of Ev my will is law. I have never cared much for No. 26, and you will find that it is very little worn. Besides, it will do you just as well as the one you're wearing, for all practical purposes."
>
> "I don't know anything about your No. 26, and I don't want to," said Dorothy firmly. "I'm not used to cast-off things, so I'll just keep my own head." (pp. 97-98)

As she rejects Langwidere's No. 26 head, Dorothy is accepting something far more important, the fact that she has such a head. Dorothy is totally inside the situation, not in the least interested in how heads might get on and off, or even in how to deal best with this imperious princess. She wants only to make clear her indignity, and what she is and isn't used to, in Kansas or in Ev. Dorothy's ability to respond to the high and the mighty just as she does to the miserable and low may imply something about American democracy, but, more simply, it expresses Baum's central attitude about life. The extraordinary freshness of the writing lies right there, in Dorothy's never thinking about how she got where she is, or how she is going to get away, or how she might have done differently or avoided danger.

To be able to go, without meaning to, into a strange and magical land, and to be able to accept each moment there as it comes and for what it brings—it is like having it always be morning, to be always beginning, and that is, after all, one of the most

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enchanting and elusive of life's possibilities. Dorothy is, in Thoreau's terms, fully awake. She does not worry or fret, she faces danger with the sense that it can conquer but never crush. This means that for Dorothy everything can be fully itself, can be known as what it is, and this means that even the smallest details can be memorable even though Baum seldom offers really full descriptions. The surest sign of this is in the illustrations; Baum is just about the perfect author for an illustrator. Neither W. W. Denslow, who did the pictures for *The Wizard,* nor John R. Neill, who did all the others, is a great artist, but Baum gave them chances to do wonderful things, and they did not fail. On the one hand Baum does not describe with the kind of meticulousness that might make an illustrator feel his hands were being tied or that he could do no more than match the words. On the other hand Baum provided a reading audience terribly eager to have illustrations that could reveal the outlines, shapes, and expressions which could embody the freshness and vividness that Baum makes so important. What is perhaps most interesting about the illustrations is that our imaginations invest so much in them that they can never be much better or worse than the text; Baum has so enchanted Denslow and Neill that when he is at his best, so are they, and when he is not, they are not.[3]

This leads us to see why it is that Baum is more like Thoreau than like the authors of most children's books, especially the European ones. We might agree that any kind of enchantment involves locking onself into the present moment, and obliterating the past, but most enchantment is like a narcotic or sexual excitement in its implication that there will be a future when the enchantment is broken. The reason some fairy tales, for instance, are so very haunting is that they take us into the world of wishes,

[3] For the best demonstration of this compare the illustrations for *Dorothy and the Wizard* with those for the books written just before and just after. *Dorothy and the Wizard* is an unpleasant book, and Neill's pictures are equally so: Dorothy is wooden and the Wizard is a grotesque, red-faced, hook-nosed, assertively bald, often as frightening as the monsters. Dorothy in the *Ozma* pictures is pudgy and is usually twisting her head or her shoulders in some splendid confident way; Dorothy in *The Road* is thinner, more of a lady, prettier, less animated, but all that fits with the almost dangerless situations of the book, as do Neill's intricate and decorative pictures of the Shaggy Man and the lovely statues of Dorothy, the Tin Woodman, and the Scarecrow outside the Tin Woodman's castle, all drawn in imitation of the plain, wooden, and beautifully naive pictures W. W. Denslow did in *The Wizard.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grip us powerfully there, and then let us go, to remember how frightening or magnificant it was where we have been, how much stronger our feelings were there than in the ordinary world. The enchantment of the great tales is, thus, a kind of night-time enchantment, analogous to dreams, where hidden things are uncovered, and from the vision of which we wake. Baum is not like that at all; the present tense into which he seeks to lock us is neither as withdrawn from the ordinary world nor as powerful. After one moment we have another, and we move without feeling that we are going deeper or farther into some mystery, so that his way of creating a present tense is also a way of being unconcerned about the future as well as the past. To feel one is getting deeper into something, getting closer to the heart of a mystery, is to diminish the desire to live totally now, and it is to imply that because we are going somewhere we will also come back. The narrative sense is stronger in fairy stories than in Baum, as is the sense of history and causation, but it is precisely what Baum "lacks" here that allows him to cast his own enchanting spells. Dorothy talks to the hen, flees from the Wheelers, rescues Tik-Tok from his cave, defies Langwidere and is imprisoned, is rescued herself by Ozma. Each event is complete in itself, and what holds the sequence together is only Baum's and Dorothy's tone and attitude which allow every action to be enjoyed for itself and not for what it allows one to go from or towards.

Not long ago I received a pleasant confirmation of just the kind of enchantment I am trying to describe here. A friend wrote, describing a journey he had taken: "We crossed Lake Champlain on the nicest ferry in the world, a regular Oz ferry." I was expected to know what an Oz ferry is, and I think I do. It is not, as one might think, like a ferry one can find in the land of Oz. As it happens, there is a ferry in Oz, in *The Lost Princess,* but it is nothing more than a large rowboat and the journey it takes across a river is described in two uninteresting sentences. But a "regular Oz ferry," I take it, is one that enchants by making its passengers feel locked into the present, oblivious of life on either bank, past or future. On the ferry life is magical because one can accept the present completely, not by fleeing or escaping or rushing towards, but by simply being able to ignore everything

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

else. Baum is mostly a rural writer, so it probably is not surprising that the "regular Oz ferry" had a rural setting, but the enchantment, presumably, is made by journeying and not by being in any particular place or kind of place.

The journey, especially that taken to a magic country by a child, is what Baum does best because it provides Baum with just the right amount of narrative sequence. All those effects that we lump under the name "suspense," which are the result of linking events causally, making each one count because it leads on to the next—Baum seldom does this kind of thing well for very long. On the other hand, a fully disparate series of events, a journey from this to that to the next place, with no narrative tissue whatever—Baum does this fairly often, and usually not very well, because in these sequences the emphasis is not on Dorothy but on the queer things she meets, and the effect this gives is like that of wandering around in a zoo; we are locked into a present with no central presence to enchant. But the journey to the magic country offers just the right sense that one is going somewhere, not necessarily towards anything, and Dorothy or some other heroine or hero is forced constantly to respond freshly, with the sense not just that what she sees is new, but also that it is different, and challengingly so.

Let me offer one more example. At the beginning of what is perhaps the most enchanting of the magic journeys, *The Road to Oz,* Dorothy meets the Shaggy Man. He asks the road to Butterfield, but when she sets out to show him she finds that not far from her house there is suddenly a whole host of roads she has never seen before. Finding she doesn't know the way home she agrees to follow one of the roads with the Shaggy Man, and so, very quickly, we are in Kansas, but also in a magic country as well. A little way down the road they meet a boy digging:

> Dorothy watched the boy dig.
> "Where do you live?" she asked.
> "Don't know," was the reply.
> "How did you come here?"
> "Don't know," he said again.
> "Don't you know where you came from?"
> "No," said he.
> "Why, he must be lost," she said to the shaggy man. She turned to the boy once more.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What are you going to do?" she inquired.
"Dig," said he.
"But you can't dig forever; and what are you going to do then?" she persisted.
"Don't know," said the boy.
"But you *must* know *something*," declared Dorothy, getting provoked.
"Must I?" he asked, looking up in surprise.

Even the accepting Dorothy is being outdone:

"What must I know?"
"What's going to become of you, for one thing," she answered.
"Do *you* know what's going to become of me?" he asked.
"Not—not 'zactly," she admitted.
"Do you know what's going to become of *you*?" he continued, earnestly.
"I can't say I do," replied Dorothy, remembering her present difficulties. [*The Road to Oz* (Chicago, 1909), pp. 29-30]

This is wonderful, and wonderful for showing why Baum is best on the magic journeys to magic countries. The boy himself is fine here, of course, but his placement in the story is also just right. By means of his ignorance he can expose the ignorance of everyone else about the relation of "lost" to "found" and "real" to "magic." Had Baum brought him in before the cluster of roads appears he would seem only a piquant stupid lad; had he waited to bring him in after the visits to the fox and donkey kingdoms, after we and Dorothy had gotten clearer about the kind of magic we are dealing with, he would have added much less and would have seemed only one more new thing, part of the zoo. The journey forces careful timing on Baum just as it forces Dorothy to respond with continual freshness; the events need have no causal relation to each other for their arrangement to be important. What he achieves here with the boy, Button-Bright, Baum achieves with others early in all his best journeys: with the hen in *Ozma,* the Scarecrow in *The Wizard,* with Jack Pumpkinhead in *The Land,* to a lesser extent with the Patchwork Girl in the book named after her, and with the Ork in *The Scarecrow.*

As one might expect, it is in the early Oz books, when there are still fresh journeys to magic countries to be taken, that Baum is most often at his very best. After Dorothy moves to Oz permanently, a move Baum made as part of his strategy for writing no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more Oz books, she loses a good deal of her sparkle and becomes like most of the other residents of the Emerald City. Baum tried with Betsy Bobbin and Trot to find substitutes for Dorothy, but his heart wasn't in such journeys any more; he knew too completely how they went before he started. It is for this reason that some Oz admirers wish Baum had been able to stop; the later books, they argue, show a marked falling off in interest and quality. *Tik-Tok* is almost entirely a reworking of old materials; *The Patchwork Girl* has as its hero the least interesting of Baum's children, Ojo, and is constantly marred by Baum's lamentable taste in punning and horseplay; *The Scarecrow* has some good early moments with Trot and Cap'n Bill getting to Oz, but then it dwindles away into wooden romance; *The Tin Woodman* and *The Magic* are almost grotesquely tired; the last book, *Glinda,* has to be badly padded with census taking of all the old Oz characters in order to be made into one of the shortest books in the series. Furthermore, nothing in these stories can match the great opening journeys in *The Land, Ozma,* and *The Road.*

But this way of arguing the case distorts Baum's talents and achievement, even if it does effectively isolate his very best things. Baum wrote very fast and seems never to have worried if he sustained his tale for the length of a whole book. He seems to have known when he began a book how it should start and end, and he left the middle to be contrived as he went along. Rereading *The Wizard,* for instance, is always a strange experience if one has grown accustomed to seeing Victor Fleming's movie once a year. Book and movie each begin wonderfully, although in very different ways—the movie is spectacular, and we know how good Baum's matter-of-factness can be. But from then on most of the advantages seem to be with the movie. Oz buffs may complain about having the whole thing be a dream, but it makes its own kind of sense, and does so by emphasizing two characters, the Wizard and the Wicked Witch of the West, whom Baum uses only as part of his zoo. After seeing what the movie can do to make a story out of the thing, one feels that Baum really was happier ambling along with his satirical situations and commentary than he was in caring very much about how the whole book ought to go. The second Oz book, *The Land,* and the fifth, *The Road,* are really wonderful for a hun-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dred pages or more, but then fade, and the fourth, *Dorothy and the Wizard,* and the sixth, *The Emerald City,* are among the worst in the series. This means that we can't treasure an image of Baum doing wonderfully well with Oz until he lost interest, because he was always capable of losing interest, of falling into slapdash writing and trivial zoo-keeping inventiveness. Furthermore, two of the later books in the series, *Rinkitink* and *The Lost Princess,* though they take no journeys to magic lands and so lack some of the moment-to-moment sparkle of some of the early books, are very good at sustaining their story through to the end, and the last book, *Glinda,* thin as it is, has a fine central situation and, as we shall see later, one spectacular stretch.

We can come closer to explaining the peculiarities and unevenness of Baum's achievement, I think, if we take a look at his expressed aim in writing all his children's books. He wanted to offer what he thought of as American fairy tales, by which he meant something as suited to his country as European tales perhaps were to their place and time. In the introduction to *The Wizard* he writes:

> . . . for the time has come for a series of newer "wonder tales" in which the stereotyped genie, dwarf and fairy are eliminated, together with all the horrible and blood-curdling incident devised by their authors to point a fearsome moral to each tale. Modern education includes morality; therefore the modern child seeks only entertainment in its wonder-tales and gladly dispenses with all disagreeable incident.

There is here both an incomprehension of the nature of European fairy tales and philistine tone that one can lament, but in fact, had Baum always remembered these words and the aim they envisage, he would have been much better off. The children in European fairy tales tend either to be endowed with great power because they are royalty or else to be potential victims of the ogres and witches of the surrounding forest; seldom are they presumed to be naturally adequate, which is what Baum wanted in his children. Given that, he could trust them to be presences in their stories such that he needed to offer none himself as narrator. Correspondingly, he wanted to base all his "wicked" creatures on the image of the naughty or spoiled child rather than on the image of evil stepmothers; all his monsters, like the Man

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the Giant Hammer or Mr. Yoop the Giant, are trapped and chained, not free, like Grendel, to wander and pillage. Baum's best villain is the Nome King who is very powerful but whose power is never really useful to him or threatening to others and whose folly and tantrums are much more childish than really malevolent. He can be patronized, even lectured, by Dorothy.

Thus far Baum is right, and in his insistence on excluding certain things common to most other fairy tales he prepared the way for including what he could do best, and that was indeed a kind of modern American wonder-tale. But Baum was not a man of artistic principle, even with his own principles in mind. He wrote hurriedly and he improvised at will, and he thus gives the air of one who happens upon his best things just as unexpectedly as he stumbles on his worst. When the improvising does not inspire him he is perfectly capable of adorning his tale with pointed morals of a cheerful, incurious, know-nothing, populist sort. Baum was always too busy doing what he was doing, too delighted with the prospect of delighting others, really to look very closely at the world around him; he was too careless of what he was doing in his own books to see how he could spoil some really enchanting writing by his satire. Anyone who can begin a book like *The Land of Oz* with Mombi and Tip and the bringing of Jack Pumpkinhead to life, which is one of the truly enchanting passages in American literature, and who then could let himself descend to the satiric portraits of the feminist Jinjur and, much worse, the phony intellectual H. M. Wogglebug, is not just a slapdash writer but a writer ignorant and even uninterested in what it is he does best.

The satiric stuff, however, for the most part only mars and upsets; the satiric figures are part of the zoo, and when we are touring the zoo we are always soon on to something else. Baum could get into even worse trouble when he fell into some "horrible and bloodcurdling incidents" of the sort that he was avowedly trying to avoid. Baum's sense of the wicked or villainous is usually little more than a sense of power arbitrarily and capriciously used and, as we have seen with the Princess Langwidere, he could quite often rely on the good sense of his heroine or hero to point up the absurdity of this abuse of power. After the incident with the heads, Langwidere can imprison Dorothy if she chooses, but Doro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thy is the victor and so rescue should be and is soon on the way. But things do not always go so well. Quite often, it would seem, Baum would begin a situation by imagining an interesting object for the zoo—a country, let us say, where one can be put in jail or executed if one is a stranger, or picks flowers, or inadvertently does damage to an insignificant thing that is then announced to be important, or eats a lunch pail growing on a tree. Now if, at this point, Baum is not really taking his young heroine or hero somewhere, if he has nothing more in mind in his invention than the inventing itself, he is then liable to treat his heroine or hero like a victim, and to fall into situations best left to Lewis Carroll, who could create really frightening images of power, as Baum could not, and who could do it without losing his wit and humor, as Baum could not.

At the time he began writing the fourth Oz book, *Dorothy and the Wizard,* Baum had three commercial and two artistic successes behind him. He begins by dropping Dorothy and a friend into the earth—having gotten her out of Kansas by air and water, earth was the obvious next step. But it all went wrong, because he dropped her into an extremely unpleasant place, and not even having the Wizard drop into it too could help him out. Soon the Wizard finds himself matching wits and tricks with the Sorcerer of a people known as Mangaboos, who are vegetable. Because both the Wizard and the Sorcerer are mostly humbug all should be well, but Baum gets careless about his tone and mistakenly decides to make the Prince of the Mangaboos into a cold arbitrator, thereby taking the whole affair out of the Wizard's power, to say nothing of Dorothy's or his own. The Prince decides the tourney in favor of the Wizard, the Sorcerer tries to stop the Wizard's breath, the Wizard makes a sword out of a series of knives and slices the Sorcerer in two; each step gets Baum inadvertently closer to uncontrollable violence, and when the Prince replies to the Wizard's killing of the Sorcerer by announcing that all the strangers must be destroyed, the tone of the whole thing has gotten so grim that Baum is lost. All those responses which Dorothy can make, which even the Wizard can make in a pinch, are no longer possible, and so Baum has got to help them out. It takes him another forty pages to do this, none of them interesting, and by then the book has stumbled on for so long Baum

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doesn't know how to recover. The tone of the whole is unpleasant and edgy without ever being expressively so, and all because it gets started wrong. Baum writes his way both in and out of his situations, and falls into most of his worst writing just by not asking, or even caring, where he is going. So too, it would seem, he falls into his best writing and responds to a good situation with a splendid instinct for what to do next. It is like a juggling act, superb as long as it goes on, but a terrible mess the moment it begins to go wrong.

The essence of Baum is his restless, careless ease, his indifference to the complexities of life, his eagerness to describe what enchanted him without ever exploring or understanding it. Such people often become entertainers of one sort or another, but they seldom become writers. He is the sort of person of whom it might be said that he had a knack for a particular kind of writing the way others have a knack for singing, or dancing, or hitting a baseball. He obviously enjoyed writing, but his view of himself as a pleaser of audiences and his lack of interest in disciplining his genius meant that he often wrote a good deal that he didn't really want to write. Of course it is these traits that enabled him to do superbly what many wiser and more self-conscious writers have failed at doing, that gave him his fundamental respect for the children who were his central figures and his audience, and that allowed him to be enchanting about what enchanted him. But his attention span, if that is the right term, seems to have been no longer than that of an intelligent child, so it is not surprising that he tired within a great many of the Oz books before they ended, and of the whole series before it ended, yet pushed on with both until the end of his life.

Given this, there is something very moving about certain things in two of the very late Oz books. *The Tin Woodman* is a dreary book, but something interesting happens in it. Near the beginning of their journey to find the girl the Tin Woodman lost when he rusted in the forest before Dorothy found him in *The Wizard,* the Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and Woot the Wanderer go to the castle of the giantess, Mrs. Yoop. She has been sitting for years, amusing herself with her ability to do transformations, lonely and bored, and for the first time in the Oz books we have a sense of the possible curse of living forever. Mrs. Yoop wants

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be left alone, but if others are foolish enough to enter her valley, then she will transform them:

> The woman was not unpleasant to look at; her face was not cruel; her voice was big, but gracious in tone; but her words showed that she possessed a merciless heart and no pleadings would alter her wicked purpose. [*The Tin Woodman of Oz* (Chicago, 1918), p. 88]

We can tell here, as we could with the Prince of the Mangaboos *Dorothy and the Wizard,* that Baum is getting out of his depths, but what is more interesting than that is his insistence that we do not see Mrs. Yoop simply as another monster. She is heartless, but not really cruel; she seeks neither friends nor enemies; she has no insatiable appetites and really just wants to be left alone to try to amuse herself as best she can. This is not Baum we are seeing here, but she is expressing some things that he felt by 1918, when he had written twelve Oz books and dozens of books of other kinds, when part of him wanted to be left alone to do his transformations to amuse himself rather than an adoring world. All this is a little too dark and scary to be developed, yet it proved too powerful to be dropped. At the climax of the book the Tin Woodman finds his old girl, Nimmie Aimee, and she is, as it were, Mrs. Yoop transformed. Nimmie Aimee lives behind an invisible wall that was built to keep strangers out, and with a man who was assembled from the meat parks of Nick Chopper and another man now made of tin. About her husband she sounds the same sort of note that Mrs. Yoop sounds about her pets; he isn't much, she says, but "a new husband would have to be scolded—and gently chided—until he learns my ways." Baum disliked feminists, and he never thought husbands were creatures you brought to heel, but he is clearly on Nimmie Aimee's side here:

> "I advise you to go back to your homes and forget me, as I have forgotten you."
>
> . . . "Are you happy?" asked the Tin Soldier.
>
> "Of course I am," said Nimmie Aimee; "I'm the mistress of all I survey—the queen of my little domain."
>
> "Wouldn't you like to be the Empress of the Winkies?" asked the Tin Woodman.
>
> "Mercy, no," she answered. "That would be a lot of bother. I don't care for society, or pomp, or posing. All I ask is to be left alone and not to be annoyed by visitors." (p. 278)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Tin Woodman and the others claim to be happy to hear this, but it is a forlorn troop that leaves her house. Against the plea to be left alone, against the weary acknowledgment that what one has isn't much but can be made to serve, there is no magic. There was even no way Baum could expect others to hear him crying out from the inside of his book.

But there was to be one last transformation, in *Glinda of Oz,* and magically it was not into a feebler cry for peace and quiet, but into a sequence of two chapters as good as any Baum ever wrote. A young Skeezer named Ervic has come in possession of a kettle of water in which float three fishes who have been transformed from three young ladies, adepts of magic. The fishes tell him that the only one who can restore them to their true shape is Red Reera, a Yookoohoo:

> "What her real form may be we do not know. This strange creature cannot be bribed with treasure, or coaxed through friendship, or won by pity. She has never assisted anyone, or done wrong to anyone, that we know of. All her wonderful powers are used for her own selfish amusement." [*Glinda of Oz* (Chicago, 1920), p. 206]

By now we can recognize Red Reera as Baum's fantasy figure of a recluse who is a good person strangely beyond the touch of the needs of others. And Ervic is one last version of Dorothy, Tip, and the others. As the two meet, it is as though Baum is testing himself, his desire to withdraw, and using his own best creation, the child taking the magic journey, as his challenger:

> "I'm told you are the only real Yookoohoo in all Oz. Why won't you amuse others as well as yourself?"
>
> "What right have you to question my actions?"
>
> "None at all."
>
> "And you say you are not here to demand any favors of me?"
>
> "For myself I want nothing from you."
>
> "You are wise in that. I never grant favors."
>
> "That doesn't worry me," declared Ervic.
>
> "But you are curious? You hope to witness some of my magic transformations?"
>
> "If you wish to perform any magic, go ahead," said Ervic. "It may interest me and it may not. If you'd rather go on with your knitting, it's all the same to me. I am in no hurry at all." (pp. 200-211)

Baum, the old magician, leery of any new claims to be made on him, yet fascinated as always by the child who resolutely and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instinctively lives where he is, is agreeing to do one last trick, as it were, if the child is clever enough to charm him into doing it. Ervic is simultaneously bold and cautious, playing on Reera's curiosity about his apparent indifference to her, trying to manage things so she will think he doesn't want the fishes transformed and will therefore transform them; Reera, bored unless she is doing something magical, falls into his trap:

> "Why not let me transform them?"
> "Well," said Ervic, as if hesitating, "ask the fishes. If they consent, why—why then, I'll think it over."
> Reera bent over the kettle and asked:
> "Can you hear me, little fishes?"
> All three popped their heads above the water.
> "We can hear you," said the bronzefish.
> "I want to give you other forms, such as rabbits, or turtles, or girls, or something; but your master, the surly Skeezer, does not wish me to. However, he has agreed to the plan if you will consent."
> "We'd like to be girls," said the silverfish.
> "No, no," exclaimed Ervic. (pp. 224-225)

Ervic offers Baum's plea—no more girls—as a ruse, and Reera offers Baum's final bargain with the same girls—I'll do it one last time your way if you'll let me believe I'm having my own way:

> "Will you agree to go away and leave me alone in my cottage, whenever I command you to do so?" asked Reera.
> "We promise that," cried the three fishes.
> "Don't do it! Don't consent to the transformation," urged Ervic. (pp. 225-226)

But Reera, like Baum, had really succumbed long before, and so had to let the child's way of being himself, grave and playful, be magical and transforming again.

It is as close as Baum ever came to understanding his art, I think, this late scene between Ervic and the Yookoohoo. The conditions demanded that the child in this scene be more calculating, less simply accepting and responding, than the children in the earlier enchanting moments, but in a way the cry to be left alone is harder to challenge, accept, or defy, than the demand to have one's head exchanged for another. All Baum seems to have known was that he was indeed a Yookoohoo, one who could do transformations, and that the world seemed never to tire of him and his magic. So at the end he saw himself as having to accept this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fact the way Dorothy has to accept Langwidere's threat as a real one, preposterous though it seems. Of course he is not as good as she is at this accepting, but then he was old, and tired, and she is young and living in the morning; so, sweet as it is, this scene can never be the one we remember when we think of Oz.

Baum's was such a rare gift that it seems almost impertinent to ask how good he is or how much he achieved, or to try to assess his books with great sobriety. When you say about an author that he was careless of his art and seldom wrote as well as he could, when you add that he never thought hard about life or grasped its complexities, and add to that the fact that even his intuitive genius carried with it no power to convey sadness or fear or joy, you seem to be saying that he cannot be very good. But the virtues of which these apparently crushing limitations are really only the defects, are virtues of the sort we believe to exist in life far more than we ever see them in literature. And so Baum is to be treasured more than many who seem to have a better claim on our respect and on our imagination—which is just what has happened. Never more than tolerated by librarians and other guardians of the hoard that we label Children's Literature, never rediscovered by hungry academics poking around for some fresh meat, or even marrow, never even the favorite author of a great man, Baum continues to be read and loved and then reread by thousands who know better than to scorn him or let him do less than delight and enchant. Neither Ervic nor we ask why it is important to have the fishes transformed, or what difference it will make if they are, which is another way of saying that the magic itself, the inventing of Yookoohoos, is never the important quality in the Oz books, and it exists only as validation of the other magic that is the child's wonderful acceptance. The validation, furthermore, is total, so the child and his readers are never deceived, never shown anything they cannot trust or whose motives are ulterior. As a guide to life it is as foolish as it is essential: to be free of self and of the nagging necessities of maturity is usually to be irresponsible and wasteful, but here in Oz it is truly liberating and enchanting, the challenge and promise of the morning.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PHILIP LEVINE

Late Moon

2 a.m.
December, and still no moon
rising from the river.

My mother
home from the beer garden
stands before the open closet

her hands still burning.
She smooths the fur collar,
the scarf, opens the gloves

crumpled like letters.
Nothing is lost
she says to the darkness, Nothing.

The moon finally above the town.
The breathless stacks,
the coal slumps,

the quiet cars
all whitened at last.
Her small round hand whitens,

the hand a stranger held
and released
while the Polish music wheezed.

I'm drunk, she says,
and knows she's not. In her chair
undoing brassiere and garters

she sighs like a dog

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and waits for the need
to move.

The moon will descend
in a spasm of silver
tearing the screen door,

the eyes of fire
drown in the still river,
and she will be herself.

The little jewels
on cheek and chin
darken and go out,

and in darkness
nothing falls
staining her lap.

War

At noon my young aunt
comes home in a cab
she stops
on the landing
embracing a sack
of potatoes and looks back
somewhere
she's lost her new stockings
and her new black gloves
somewhere she's
been awake for days
her hands shake
she fumbles in her purse
feeling the dark wads
of money

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Before the sink
she cries in the half light
shaking out the yellow chips
sinking her hands
slowly in water
twisting and untwisting
the two slips
her little fists pressed
to her cheeks
she stares out
the bathroom window
the ore boats dark
against the Canadian shore
the burned elms
the coal hills steaming

Later the radio argues
and she falls asleep
on the sofa
the kettle steams and steams
the windows go black
she dreams her husband
is home, his fists burned red
he wants his children
and will have them
she wakens believing
her life is over
beyond the darkness she sees
the great blank mirrors
and hears a small voice
crying from nowhere

She tells herself
she will sleep again
and waken with another man
in another life
she tells herself
this war will end
when she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

can no longer stand it
the way the rain ends
when a jar
overflows on the sill
she tells herself
she must be strong
so her mother
will kiss her
and the voice will stop
so the two slips will dry

*

December 1942
a bleeding soldier in a torn jacket
waits at the back of a diner
no one asks him anything
dead horses blaze in the cold, wheels
lock, crates of secret wings slide forward
in the guarded hallways children stand
for hours holding their metal trays
downtown the workers sleep in the movies
their heads hung back over the seats
their mouths wet and calling
when the darkness spreads from the factories
oiling everything, they waken
not as the ghosts of women
black and white, dancing in tears
but as themselves and go out
into the streets past the beer gardens
where the sisters burn like salt
and they remember nothing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PHILIP HOBSBAUM

The Temptation of Giant Despair

THE SAVAGE GOD[1] purports to be a study of the relationship between suicide and literature. It is news to me that any such relation exists. Rather one could say that this book is the projection of a highly personal, even anti-social, ethic. Mr. Alvarez believes that extreme situations are best met by extreme measures. If the world proves untenable, the best thing to do is let it go. This is not simply to claim suicide as a universal panacea, for, if it were, what would Mr. Alvarez be doing writing about it? Rather he suggests that life is terminated voluntarily by only the finer spirits. In killing themselves, they give their existence definite shape. They, the successful suicides, form an austere and select brotherhood: Van Gogh, Virginia Woolf, Hart Crane, Scott Fitzgerald, Brendan Behan, Cesare Pavese, Modigliani, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Hemingway. These were the intelligences that responded sanely to a situation that had become insane.

> In other words, that sense of chaos which, I suggested, is the driving force behind the restless experimentalism of the twentieth-century arts has two sources: one developing directly from the period before 1914, the other emerging for the first time during World War I and growing increasingly stronger and more unavoidable as the century has gone on. Both, perhaps, are consequences of industrialism: the first is connected with the destruction of the old social relationships and the related structure of beliefs during the industrial revolution; the second is produced by the technology itself, which, in the process of creating the wherewithal to make life easier than ever before, has perfected, as a kind of lunatic spin-off, instruments to destroy life completely. More simply, just as the decay of religious authority in the nineteenth century made life seem absurd by depriving it of any ultimate coherence, so the growth of modern technology has made death itself absurd by reducing it to a random happening totally unconnected with the inner rhythms and logic of the lives destroyed.

[1] THE SAVAGE GOD, by *A. Alvarez.* Random House. $7.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Alvarez follows Durkheim in believing that suicide is brought about by social pressure, but he goes to an extreme in maintaining that it is a logical procedure to take in the midst of chaos. To prove his point he would have to demonstrate that our age is more chaotic than preceding ages. But it is very difficult to equate the hardships of one time against those of another: each century is ridden with its own brand of disadvantages. Even if Mr. Alvarez were able to show us that civilisation has declined, he would still have to demonstrate how suicide is an intelligent way of coping. If society is in a state of dissolution, one would expect its intellectual heroes to do something about holding it together. Suicide, after all, is a way not of fulfilling but of escaping one's obligations. And to advocate self-destruction as a heroic act seems to me an abnegation of reason. However, if Mr. Alvarez is determined to side with those unreasonable people, suicides, he cannot be surprised if he is thought to take on, with their cause, a measure of their folly.

It is not social concern that characterizes the suicide, but the lack of it. The suicide evinces little feeling for his fellows, least of all for those who have to clear up the mess that he leaves behind him. Mr. Alvarez manages to damp down this side of things by being highly selective in the suicides he chooses to talk about. But I find his choice of examples rather tendentious. Some of the people he mentions did not commit suicide at all. Others, like Hemingway, killed themselves as a result of a decline in their talent; they, too, give away Alvarez' case—their suicide is a sign of their failure. And most of them came to grief through over-indulgence of one kind or another—alcohol, drugs, sex, egocentric emotion. It is this kind of suicide that is most frequent in the arts: the kind who has patently failed to make an adult adjustment to society. Hart Crane, Scott Fitzgerald, Tchaikowsky —these are the true Romantics. They are the victims of an excess of emotion that never succeeded in attaching itself to an appropriate object. The intensity with which they voice their complaint drowns out whatever it was they were complaining about. Therefore their work falls short of tragedy: it lacks the stoicism that in the great masters contains emotion within the discipline of form. The work of such artists as Tchaikowsky operates within a narrow range, from the sensational on the one hand to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pathetic on the other. Detachment, humour, insight are almost totally lacking. To bolster up their work, they entangle it with their lives. He who would attempt to write critically about them succeeds only in producing a species of biography.

This has been the fate of Mr. Alvarez. *The Savage God* begins with a laudatory memoir of the brilliant American poet, Sylvia Plath, who killed herself in 1963. And it ends with an essay in autobiography recounting Mr. Alvarez' attempt to end his own life. These are the poles between which the book oscillates.

The reason for the currency of figures such as Sylvia Plath is clear enough. It has to do with the decline of religion, though not in the way that Mr. Alvarez suggests. We no longer possess national heroes in whom we can legitimately take pride; we no longer have a calendar of saints who conveniently embody the archetypes dear to us. Yet the need for adoration and consolation remains. Therefore the twentieth century has erected various secular figures before whom it can prostrate itself. Examples of this are legion, and, in practice, they are examples not only of fact but of literary form. In other words, the modern attempt to create a personal mythology brings about a recognizable tone whose antecedents can be found in the English poets of the 1890's, in the poetry of W. B. Yeats (e.g. "In Memory of Major Robert Gregory"), and, more particularly, in the Pisan Cantos of Ezra Pound. It is a mode predominant now in the United States.

Its prime exponent in recent years was John Berryman, and Mr. Alvarez quite rightly says that the subject of the *Dream Songs* is mourning. But it is Berryman he mourns for; we shall not go to his work in search of disinterested recreation of personality. Particular characters with widely differing characteristics are all subsumed in a kind of generalized rant.

> I'm cross with god who has wrecked this generation,
> First he seized Ted, then Richard, Randall and now Delmore,
> In between he gorged on Sylvia Plath . . .

This is mere name-dropping; and nothing much is done with the names once they're dropped. It is impossible from this petulant verse to reconstruct the characters of Theodore Roethke, R. P. Blackmur, Randall Jarrell and Sylvia Plath; and if we can react to that of Delmore Schwartz, it is not from anything that Berryman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

says here, but from elegies such as "Dream Song 150," which is another kind of writing altogether. The strength of the Schwartz elegies is that they are about a man whom the author knew so well that he could not erect him into a legend. The weakness of most of the Dream Songs is that they are not about people at all. The characters are reduced to pointers presaging which way Berryman—a self-professed alcoholic—felt himself to be going. This is a mode suitable only for the creation of awe; not the most intelligent of reactions to one's fellow-beings, let alone oneself. And so we have writing that is fatally coarse, like this:

> Your face broods from my table, Suicide.
> Your force came on like a torrent towards the end
> of agony and wrath.
> You were christened in the beginning Sylvia Plath
> and changed that name for Mrs. Hughes and bred
> and went on round the bend
>
> till the oven seemed the proper place for you . . .

This sort of plaint is hardly going to help towards an understanding of Sylvia Plath, either in her life or her work, though it might have told a psychiatrist something about Berryman. If Berryman had known Plath as he had known Delmore Schwartz, we might have had an elegy about a human being instead of a genuflection before a demi-god—who still, despite the circumstantial detail, remains abstract.

The Plath of Berryman's poems has little to do with the Plath of real life. The figure here is erected into a symbol—something to be trundled out as archetype, even though it is not in itself archetypal. The verse sobs brokenly over the plaster saint.

> She—she her credentials
> has handed in, leaving alone two tots
> and widower to what he makes of it—
> surviving guy . . .

There is something in Plath that lends itself to this kind of mythologizing. One could compile an anthology of poems which use her death as a means of triggering off attitudes already set up in their authors. Contributors would include Erica Jong, Christopher Levenson and, most egregiously, Anne Sexton—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

O Sylvia, Sylvia,
with a dead box of stones and spoons,
with two children, two meteors
wandering loose in the tiny playroom . . .

Thief!—
how did you crawl into,

crawl down alone
into the death I wanted so badly and for so long . . .

This is to turn Sylvia Plath into a thing enskied and sainted. The aberration is seen in the shrillness and freneticism of the verse which, ironically enough, derives from some of the mannerisms of Plath's own work.

It is a peculiar fact that the final phase of Sylvia Plath crucially influenced certain poets who had, years previously, served as her own working models. There is a weird kind of cross-fertilisation here. When Plath was writing blameless poems about getting motes in her eyes, Berryman and Sexton were already striking strange attitudes—Confessional Poetry, it was called. No doubt it was their work that encouraged Plath to move from her earliest influences into being a Confessional Poet herself, though one can doubt whether the move was a wise one. The important thing to remember is that she had a verse technique that few of her contemporaries could equal: it may have been limited, but it could certainly operate with conviction. So that when Sylvia Plath came to write her Last Poems, she did so with a euphoria and power of phrase of her own; backed up, finally, with her suicide. And therefore it is hardly surprising that the Confessional Poets, who had in some sense initiated this final phase of Plath's, took it up as a further extension of their poetic utterance and as a way of absorbing Plath into their personal mythology. Strong connections can be made between Plath's poems prefiguring her death and the poems called forth in celebration of it. In his funeral poem, Berryman sees her face looking up at him from the table—no doubt this refers to the issue of *The Review* that published her last poems with a striking photograph on its cover. But well before Berryman had put pen to paper on this particular topic, Plath had envisaged the effect her death would have upon people, especially people as Romantic as Berryman himself.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Berryman sees her face brooding up at him—in "Last Words" she imagines the crowd peering down at her as she lies in her tomb; deified, immortalized, like an Egyptian queen.

> I do not want a plain box, I want a sarcophagus
> With tigery stripes, and a face on it
> Round as the moon to stare up.
> I want to be looking at them when they come
> Picking among the dumb minerals, the roots . . .

Plath has no time to mythologize anyone else; she is her own mythology—

> Let me have my copper cooking pots, let my rouge pots
> Bloom about me like night flowers, with a good smell . . .

Striking as this is, surely it is very morbid? If the poetry of Sylvia Plath is authentic, it is the authenticity not of a doctor effecting a diagnosis, but of a neurotic projecting her pain. To think highly of the poetry of Sylvia Plath is not to erect her into one of a hierarchy of secular saints. What Mr. Alvarez calls a poetry of extremes, I prefer to characterize as the Mode of Neurosis.

The difference between Berryman and Sexton on the one hand, and Sylvia Plath on the other, is far more a matter of degree than of kind. All are highly self-conscious artists, jacking themselves up toward half-dreaded disclosures. All three tend to lose sensitivity in sensationalism; none of them have a high regard for fact. But the distortions in Berryman and Sexton are fairly obvious, as witness their remarks upon Sylvia's deserted children—"tots" in Berryman's cant, "meteors" in that of Anne Sexton. The tone is wrong for the event; Plath herself deliberately chose to leave her own children by committing suicide. Plath's art is similarly distorting, but it has a wild euphoria of its own. The exaggeration is made almost convincing by means of a striking gift for the impressionistic phrase.

Sylvia Plath has a much admired poem called "Morning Song"—

> Love set you going like a fat, gold watch.
> The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry
> Took its place among the elements.

This has the virtues of Romanticism, but also its faults. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sensational image in the first line—"like a fat, gold watch"—exists as an entity in itself; it has to, for it does nothing to explicate the context. The image may be seen for what it is, a far-fetched conceit, especially when it is compared with a more modest poem on a similar subject by that fine American poet Anne Stevenson—herself a contemporary of Plath's.

> I thought you were my victory
> though you cut me like a knife
> when I brought you out of my body
> into your life.
>
> Tiny antagonist, gory,
> blue as a bruise. The stains
> of your cloud of glory
> bled from my veins . . .

This poem, "The Victory," debunks all the "cloud of glory" Romanticism that surrounds Plath's view of motherhood. Miss Stevenson says, in effect, that a baby is far more like a blue bruise than it is like a gold watch. And, after one has recovered from Sylvia Plath's spectacular assault upon the senses, is it possible to disagree? The idea of the embryo's heart beginning to beat no doubt set up the metaphor of the watch ticking, but in most respects a growing embryo is totally unlike a manufactured object such as a watch, and in no sense can it be said to resemble a *gold* watch. This is an extension out of reality into a euphoria of the poet's own contriving, and it is an example, frequent in Plath, of a verbal flourish assuming an existence independent of any possible context. It is no accident that the only image seen clearly in "Morning Song" is one that relates to the young mother herself—

> cow-heavy and floral
> In my Victorian night gown.

Plath is the heroine, not only of other people's poetry, but her own. Therefore her relationships with other human beings are caricatured. But at least the caricature has bite and fury; as witness another "domestic" poem, "Lesbos":

> And my child, look at her, face down on the floor!
> Little unstrung puppet, kicking to disappear!
> Why she is a schizophrenic,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her face white and red, a panic.
You have stuck her kittens outside your window
In a sort of cement well
Where they crap and puke and cry and she can't hear . . .
I am packing the hard potatoes like good clothes,
I am packing the babies,
I am packing the sick cats,
O vase of acid . . .

It is Plath, not her hated rival, who is throwing the acid. There is no psychological insight here; neither in this poem nor in the one actually called "The Rival" does she seek to understand that which so enrages her. But the distinction of Plath's poetry, limited as it is, emerges from even passing comparisons with those who write in something of the same mode—witness Anne Sexton again:

I will forget
how we bumped away from each other like marionettes
on strings . . . ("The Double Image")

It is debatable how far anyone can be justified in calling a child a puppet, but at least Plath's puppet is unstrung and kicking; Sexton's is a limp abstraction. Similarly, we may feel that Plath's rhymes all too often decide what the meaning is to be—"she is a schizophrenic . . . a panic . . ."—but at least they hurry us along purposefully. They never sink to the merely mechanical sort of questioning that is characteristic of another Confessional Poet, Diane Wakoski—

what does it mean
if a child cannot talk when he is six,
if he shits in the toilet one day; in his pants the next?
what does it mean
if a man drinks and can't earn enough money? . . .
("Slicing Oranges for Jeremiah")

(and cf. Wakoski's image, in the same poem, of "gold-clock babies"). Such writing is cerebral, unfelt, seeking to bludgeon us into acquiescence. Plath, at least, can deploy her weapons more skilfully than that.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the limitations of the poetry of Sylvia Plath are personal, not merely technical, ones. They can be marked in the repeated conception of children as passive objects—puppets, roses, and the like. Her difficulty in entering into human relationships is chronic, and it is charted in an interesting piece of raw material, her novel, *The Bell Jar*. This is an account of an unsuccessful love affair, an attempted suicide, a breakdown. Before the suicide attempt takes place, the heroine visits her father's grave "to pay my father back for all the years of neglect." Notice the ambiguity of language here; one normally "pays back" old scores, "pays back" wrongs done to one. Only on the surface is there a respect for her father; beneath that is a consuming rancour. And it is this that gives life to the efficient college-girl prose. The heroine has difficulty in finding her way about the cemetery and collapses when finally she reaches the grave. "I laid my face to the smooth face of the marble and howled my loss into the cold salt rain." It is clear that a good deal more is going on here than is explicitly admitted in the text. In particular, the clutching of the tombstone suggests that the visit to a father's grave has turned into an abortive sexual encounter. Even so, there is an extraordinary amount of pain here—"howled my loss"—and it is projected outward rather than understood.

The Bell Jar is the matrix of Sylvia Plath's work and anticipates her transition into neurotic writing. Indeed, her task of correcting the proofs of this novel may well have determined the direction as well as the energy of the late poems. In particular, the verbal parallels between *The Bell Jar* and *"Daddy"* are numerous and striking.

> My German-speaking father, dead since I was nine, came from some manic-depressive hamlet in the black heart of Prussia.

> There's a stake in your fat, black heart . . .

> What I didn't say was that each time I picked up a German dictionary or a German book, the very sight of those dense, black, barbed-wire letters made my mind shut like a clam.

> I never could talk to you.
> The tongue stuck in my jaw,
> It stuck in a barb wire snare.

The plot of "Daddy"—implied, but never spelt out—tells of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a young woman thinking herself Jewish who makes the discovery that her father has been a Nazi commandant. She attempts to kill herself, and, when brought back to life, marries a man in the image of her father—"a man in black with a Meinkampf look." The poem says (echoing *The Bell Jar*) that her father died before she had time to kill him, but it also blames him for dying and leaving her prematurely. And so we see the obverse of the situation in the novel: under the surface hatred of the poem there is a desperate need for the person she abuses.

There is nothing to justify the critics' awe before this poem: it has force, but little originality. Its basis is a version of the Electra Complex. As Freud wrote in his *Lectures on Psychoanalysis,* "It is inevitable, and perfectly normal that a child should take his parents as the first objects of his love. But his libido should not remain fixated to these first objects; later on, it should merely take them as a model, and should make a gradual transition from them on to extraneous people when the time for the final choice of an object arrives." It is clear from *The Bell Jar,* from "Daddy," and from the known facts of her life, that Sylvia Plath did not succeed in making that particular adjustment. In itself, this need be no more than a limitation; plenty of poetry has been written from within the confines of a neurotic syndrome. But Plath is more constricted than this would suggest, because at no point does it appear that she clearly understood what she was saying. Therefore the writing is fraught with unresolved ambiguities. The nine-year-old child is so grieved by her father's death that she treats it as a willed departure and so wants to punish him for what seems to her a wanton desertion. She asserts that she attempted suicide at twenty to "get back" to her father (the recessive vocabulary is interesting) and at the same time she blames her father for this suicide attempt and the consequent wreck of her life. Either one of these attitudes may be true; it is hard to see how both can be, and, in any case, the divergence is not registered in the verse. Indeed, the very violence of Plath's writing enables her to put forward with equal conviction widely disparate versions of the same event. In the poem, "Lady Lazarus," the speaker boasts that she can die "exceptionally well"; but this does not prevent her from casting the world in a Nazi rôle and blaming it for killing her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Line by line, these two poems, which I suppose are Plath's show-pieces, have considerable force. Their structure, like that of most of her poems, is a simple form of association. One thought leads to the next, often propelled by the compulsive rhyming; one metaphor develops out of another. And, though this often leads to far-fetched conceits, the insistent rhythm carries the reader through.

But this is true only at the time of immediate reading. A great deal of one's understanding of poetry takes place in recollection and analysis. And, looked at critically, these poems of Sylvia Plath do not stand on their own. Their rancour, for one thing, seems in excess of the object under attack. In order to justify her fury against her father, Plath has to represent him as an ogre. But this entails not only exaggeration but over-simplification: ogres are less interesting than people. And Plath's ogre is not especially effective, even as ogres go: she had no experience of and little insight into the mentality of Nazism or the conditions of the German concentration camps. Therefore the mode she adopts prevents her ever comprehending what led her to take it up. The situation is projected; not understood. These constrictions are inbuilt: she has given up a great deal to gain the sensational effect, but sensation is only a part of experience. Moreover, like most sensational works of art, the effect of these poems tends to diminish with each repeated frequentation.

Mr. Alvarez recounts that, when Sylvia Plath first read her poems "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus" to him, they seemed to be not so much poetry as assault. I recognize the feeling, though I cannot see why it is one that should be welcomed. There can be no doubt that Sylvia Plath has a battery of special effects at her disposal, and she is more capable of wielding her instruments than Anne Sexton, Diane Wakoski and the other ladies of the confessional school. Yet if we relate her to Robert Lowell, a poet with whom she is frequently compared, the narrowness of her range and the defect of her insight will become clear. Robert Lowell covers much of Sylvia Plath's territory, but he also covers a great deal more of his own, and he has certain properties such as subtlety and humour that Sylvia Plath cannot lay claim to. He has, in *Life Studies,* an extraordinary poem about his father; like "Daddy," it derives to some extent from a prose source. No

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doubt, as with Plath, there is a neurotic sense of grievance at the root of the poem: Father is seen as a failure, Father is an exemplar who failed to set an example. Yet, in comparison with Plath, what human understanding is here! And, in contrast with Plath—who, in the later poems, has only one note—what a delicate flexibility of verse technique he manifests—

> with seamanlike celerity
> Father left the Navy
> and deeded Mother his property.
> He was soon fired. Year after year
> he still hummed "Anchors aweigh" in the tub—
> whenever he left a job
> he bought himself a smarter car.
> Father's last employer
> was Scudder, Stevens and Clark, Investment Advisors,
> himself his only client . . .

There may be neurosis here, but it is raw material refined into poetry by the delicacy of the writer's means—chiefly, a kind of humorous distancing of character. Father is seen in context as a fallible human being, not as a stylized ogre or an idol with feet of clay. This is not just a matter of technique: a sensibility governs this art that is capable of inter-reacting with other sensibilities. Unlike the writers called Confessional Poets, with whom he is so often associated, Robert Lowell has a poem here which is about its subject and which does not use that subject as an excuse for smuggling in an exhibition of its author's psychological private parts. What is true of Plath's disciples in relation to Plath is true, in an upward direction, of Plath in relation to Lowell. In order to write like a master, it is necessary to take on a great measure of his technique as well as his subject matter; but this can only be done by those who resemble him in temperament. In the case of Lowell, "temperament" involves a wealth of observation, insight, interest in other people, sophisticated humour—qualities which Sylvia Plath, for all her talent, was unable to command.

The classical qualities of the great poets were equally beyond her reach; she lacked stoicism. The death-wish overt in "Tulips" and implicit in the ski-passage of *The Bell Jar* seems hysterical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and self-regarding if we compare either text with the ice-skating episode in Wordsworth's *Prelude:*

> oftentimes
> When we had given our bodies to the wind,
> And all the shadowy banks, on either side,
> Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
> The rapid line of motion; then at once
> Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
> Stopped short, yet still the solitary Cliffs
> Wheel'd by me, even as if the earth had rolled
> With visible motion her diurnal round . . .

There is a repose, a sense of form here, that we shall not find in most of our contemporaries. The poet in Wordsworth is part of a context. There is no question, as so often happens in Sylvia Plath, of those areas of context that fail to relate to the poet being rejected.

All this would be severe were it not for the extravagant claims that have been made for Sylvia Plath. If we claim her as a great poet, how are we to describe Wordsworth? And yet there are signs that she could have developed very differently, and, to my mind, more satisfactorily, though over a trajectory more extended than the one we have. There is a volume by Sylvia Plath, interim between the prentice-work of *Colossus* and the confessional mode of the Late Poems, called *Crossing the Water.* It was published in 1971, though the poems date back some ten years previously. Here is work that seems to have learned from Robert Frost and Elizabeth Bishop, among others—sponsors, I should have thought, rather more propitious than Berryman and Sexton. Certainly the verse of Frost and Bishop embodies much of the classical quality I tried to point out in Wordsworth, and this is reflected in poems of Plath such as "Mirror," "Blackberrying" and "Crossing the Water" itself. *Crossing the Water* is a distinguished volume by any standards, and it is a great pity both for the poet and for her audience that it did not come out when it was written. It may lack the more spectacular effects of the Late Poems, but it indicates a far healthier line of development. If Sylvia Plath had been willing to let her experience come to her, instead of thrusting herself forcibly towards it, she might very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

well have become a major poet, though not the kind that her advocates declare her to be. Her case is classic only in one sense: it is a representative example of the Romantic poet's unwillingness to wait, to endure, to give a talent time to grow.

As it is, to see Sylvia Plath as a classic is to distort our view of the classics; indeed, such a debasement of critical vocabulary is itself a mark of Romanticism. It is dismaying to find this verse attracting Mr. Alvarez' kind of exaltation. And it is here that we recognize the absence in his work of disinterested research or delicate analysis. *The Savage God* is a personal exploration of a painful terrain in which Sylvia Plath figures as heroine and Mr. Alvarez himself as an unfulfilled spectator on the sidelines.

The path of a serious investigator would be very different. Mr. Alvarez tends to patronize the clinician—terming, for example, Erwin Stengel's study of suicide a "Penguin handbook." It is very much more than that. Professor Stengel takes the trouble to list the criteria indicative of suicidal breakdown. They do not savour of much that is admirable. He cites such symptoms as feelings of guilt; hypochondria; tendency towards excessive complaint; suicidal preoccupation; previous suicide attempts; social isolation—thirteen points in all. The last year of Sylvia Plath's life features no less than eight of these. This is hardly a state of mind to be recommended. It is a sentimentality of our time when the depression of a sick girl passes for courage and is discussed in terms of survival.

Mr. Alvarez makes the suicide of Sylvia Plath, and, by extension, the suicides of other unfortunates, seem inevitable. This is done by tactful omission. A total recall of the facts would tell a different story. The serious investigator would need to know about the domestic circumstances of Sylvia Plath in that last year; for example, whether or not her separation from her husband was an irreparable breach. It would be necessary to enquire whether other people were involved in the events leading up to this separation. The mental case-history of the subject would have to be brought into question. What happened to Sylvia Plath need not have been more than other women have had to face, but in her case it might have borne in upon vulnerabilities that she was unable to shore up. For example, her situation might have resembled a childhood syndrome whose reproduction in adult life could have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been a factor in her breakdown. A careful and disinterested investigation conducted along these lines could have produced, what Mr. Alvarez has not, a candid memoir of Sylvia Plath. More, it would have demonstrated that, whatever else suicide is, it cannot be termed an act of consideration.

John Bunyan—an authority on suicidal depression whom Mr. Alvarez does not cite—allegorizes the onset of neurosis in a famous passage of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian and Hopeful very foolishly take what looks like the easier of two paths and find themselves nightfoundered in the grounds of Doubting Castle. For this trespass they are incarcerated by the owner of the Castle, Giant Despair. They lie for some time in the darkness of his subterranean vault until eventually Christian breaks out into passionate speech. "What a fool, quoth he, were I thus to lie in a stinking dungeon when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle." Bunyan is saying that to a great extent depressive illness is self-motivated. The patient has some choice in the matter, if it only lies in the direction of seeking to understand what it is that afflicts him. This can be seen from the fact that anxiety often precedes that which is its ostensible object. The technique of the psychiatrist, like that of the confessor, is to contrast the intensity of a depression with the relative triviality of its assignable cause. This in itself cannot effect a cure, but it can afford an entry into reaches of the mind not accessible to surface rationalization. One may very well explain in this way a childhood hurt which can thus be put into perspective. What I am suggesting is in fact common practice in the hands of the psychiatrist and therefore may seem naive, but it does seem to me a good deal healthier than the kind of sentimentality that seeks to erect a condition of hypochondria into a state of martyrdom.

Mr. Alvarez quite sensibly cites Melville's Bartleby as an example of a person caught in extreme depressive illness. But he could not, in this way, have cited Melville. Bartleby is Melville's creature and occurs, let us remember, in a dramatic context. The limitation of Sylvia Plath is that her drama consists effectively of a single actor, herself, performing in an area constructed of her own sensations. It is all rather like Bartleby

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

writing *Bartleby,* or, indeed, Othello writing *Othello.* In order to create the Castle of Giant Despair, Bunyan had also to imagine the landscape of which it is part—the Stile, the Meadow, the Highway, the Delectable Mountains. It is this sense of a context that we miss in Sylvia Plath. The lack is not only in the constriction of subject matter but in the faults of style I have indicated as verbal conceit, emotive sensationalism, irresoluble ambiguity. In treating this as great poetry, Mr. Alvarez is doing the same violence to reason as in treating Plath's as a great life. If Plath ignored the social context, at least we can say that she was unduly vulnerable to such pressures as bore in upon her. No such excuse can be found for Mr. Alvarez. His fluent prose and gift for anecdote indicate a mind in possession of its experience; such experience, at least, as it chooses to be in possession of. But he has not chosen to tell us all that he knows or to judge that knowledge in the light of the wisdom which experience should by now have taught him. To that extent, his book is not merely superficial; it is frivolous. Mr. Alvarez is entitled to pick up his martyrology where he may, but we cannot allow him to pass it off as a study of the relationship between suicide and literature. The case for any such relation remains to be made. The practice of an art is not a game of Russian roulette; an artist cannot be evaluated in terms of his personal suffering. The line taken by Sylvia Plath led to the abnegation of reason and the dispersion of remarkable gifts. To applaud this, even from the sidelines, is to turn life into legend. One cannot congratulate Mr. Alvarez for taking leave of criticism and embracing what can only be termed a species of hagiography.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HARVEY SHAPIRO

In the Room

Seeing the figure of that man
Caught in a murderous hatred,
I wept for him openly
Before the children,
And I write of him in a low style
But touching on elevated things.

In the room
Nothing has happened
Yet the two of them
Stand apart, watching a ship
Wreck, a wild storm,
Their own blood drumming.

Her hatred of him
Makes her eyes shine,
Brings color to the points
Of her fingers and her hair.

Before we knew about urban poetry
I opened the door and found you
Bathing in the sink, on Stanton Street—
1949—your skin still gleaming.

I can't sleep.
Love has fixed my head.
Now this girl, now that.
Who needs this tumult?
I ask myself,
So proud of the hours
I spend staring.

Muse,
Once you made this chaos shine.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For the Sparrows on New Year's Morning

Resolved that I will help feed you in your ivy
And listen for you in the streets
Now that I have heard you, first sound of the year
After the harbor hootings. This morning,
Blurred as the ends of sleep,
You make my resolutions clear, touching on song:
To celebrate without cause whenever
I can put words to sense and music.
And to whoever hears me, let her know
I listen to sparrows.

"Jesus, Mary I Love You Save Souls"

IRT graffiti
For the five o'clock rush hour.
Souls in the car.
Carrying you in my head.
Your head thrown back,
Legs parted. Jesus, Mary
Save souls. I love you.
When we get
To the dark part
Of the ride, under the river,
Keep me in that light,
Subway car light,
Burning forever
With that image
In my brain.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

City Portrait

Her husband didn't give her highs,
Just made her lows less low.
Said, with the lips trembling.
Breasts too, I think.
Beautiful woman.
Going to bed with strangers now.
Trying to think it all out.
On the west side of Manhattan,
Twelve floors above the murderous streets.

Every Day

It's my own dread existence
Stalking me now with a spiritual fury
Like some beast from
Twenty thousand fathoms down
Rammed into the world by events
I seem not to have noticed.

Easy

I imagine
Making love to you
In your butterfly sweatshirt.
(How alert of me
To have noticed that.)
The wings take us up
And bring us back.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN SIMON

That Championship Season

IT WAS A GOOD FEELING, last spring when the New York Drama Critics' Circle was voting for the best play of the season, to find myself in a quandary: whether to vote for David Rabe's *Sticks and Bones* or Jason Miller's *That Championship Season*. Two good plays do not exactly constitute an embarrassment of riches. But they were both American plays; had both, thanks to Joseph Papp, made it to Broadway; and two good dramas on Broadway in one calendar year was more than we had had in some time. I have written here about Rabe's play before; now for Jason Miller's.

That Championship Season is a necessary play. In a naturalistic way it does more or less the same thing that *Sticks and Bones* does in its absurdist-symbolist fashion: it tells grass-roots America that it stinks. For even in this Vietnam-war-waging, Nixon-favoring, culture-despising year of 1972, when Neil Simon's *The Prisoner of Second Avenue* is the hottest ticket on Broadway, when *The Godfather* is the biggest cinematic money-maker, when Herman Wouk, Taylor Caldwell and Irving Wallace are perching on top of the best-seller list, there remains considerable faith in the solid backbone of America, the good and simple folk back in the small towns, the America that the two Walts, Whitman and Disney, could hear singing, the unspoiled, sweet salt of the earth. And it is these people that Miller reveals to be weak, cowardly, prejudiced, corrupt and sustained, if at all, by self-delusion. And what makes the indictment stick is, first, that it is made from an evident position of intimate knowledge and understanding of the people portrayed, and, secondly, that the judgment is made regretfully, without rancor, almost with love.

Understanding is clearly necessary for an intelligent verdict. The locale of the play, as we gather from both internal and external evidence, is Scranton, Pennsylvania, where Miller was raised. It is an unprepossessing milieu, this small, cultureless, coal-mining town, and treated without close knowledge (as in Barbara Loden's film, *Wanda*), it can strike us as completely dehumanized. But because the author was truly of that world, and now no longer is, he is able to give us both the inside-out and the outside-in view of it, the latter chiefly from the mouth of Tom, whose nomadic life has taken him largely out of the town. But more important even than knowledge is sympathy: a recognition of the humanity of these beings—of that bit of depth even in shallowness of the stirrings of awareness even in ignorance—which makes the five dramatis personae persons as well as dramatic, worthy of our concern because

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we cannot quite hide from ourselves that, under the superego, we are their brothers.

Who are the players in this quintet? There is, first, the old coach, known only as Coach, who twenty years ago guided the other four (along with another boy, Martin) to victory in the Interstate High-School Basketball Championship. The big silver trophy, with all their names engraved on it, stands proudly displayed on a table in the coach's living room, the scene of the action. The coach was subsequently retired, pensioned off, for having broken the jaw of a disrespectful student. But he and his boys—always accepting Martin—have annually come together to celebrate a victory that "gave this defeated town something to be proud of," as the coach put it, a victory on account of which a local cop will still tear up the coach's traffic tickets. The coach became the moral, social and political mentor of his boys for life, and that role is now his only *raison d'être*. It is his values that have governed their lives in one way or another—and why not, since he has abundantly drilled it into them that life and basketball are essentially identical. When one of the boys, Phil, says, "Politics is not basketball," the coach retorts, "Hell, yes. You get the crowd behind you and you can't lose. Everybody votes for a winner." And again: "Life is a game and I'm proud to say I played it with the best." And yet again: "You quit on the field, you'll quit in life. It's on the playing fields the wars are won." The pathos of this is that it is, in a sense, true; or, at least, widely believed to be so. Between the playing fields of Eton and the basketball court of Scranton there may not be that much difference, and no less a sage than Sir Walter Scott has assured us that "life is itself but a game of football." But between believing it and living it, there is a world of difference.

The boys are now in their late thirties and the coach warns them that this is the age of heart disease. (The irony is that they are not so much weak as faint of heart.) He wants them, as he always wanted them, "lean and mean." (Well, they are getting less and less lean, but they are not wanting in meanness.) There is, first, George, the mayor, who, with the coach's help, won his election by a margin of 32 votes against an old drunk. Now, however, he is up against an appealing, intelligent, honest man, Sharmen the high-school principal. George is worried, but he covers it up with bravado: Sharmen is a Jew, and a relative of his, as the coach has ferreted out, was a Communist; that and Phil's money should get George re-elected.

Phil Romano is the "dumb dago" who inherited his father's strip-mining business and is the town's rich man. Ever since school days, the boys depended on Phil's car to get laid in; now he will provide the required campaign funds. But Phil has lost confidence in George, as has most of the rest of the town, and would gladly support Sharmen, if it were not for the latter's opposition to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him as an ecological menace. Then there is James Daley, the junior-high-school principal, who first had to look after his long-dying father, then after his numerous brood, and now even after Tom, his dipsomaniac younger brother, whom he has had to fish out of the alcoholic wards of several cities. James is embittered by having been a constant, dutiful grind, sacrificing himself for others; he hopes for a belated recompense: success in politics. He is George's campaign manager, for which he is to be rewarded with the post of school superintendent. His ultimate ambition is Congress; but James, like George, is a loser, identifiable by the sweatiness under his collar.

More obviously a loser is Tom, the drunkard. Yet alcohol has turned him into one of those privileged jesters whom the coxcomb allows to utter sardonic truths intolerable from a sober, responsible person. Tom is a "happy" drinker who finds the truth in wine; but he is too weak to be set free by it, except to go off to other cities for his binges. And then James has to bring him back home. Tom uses the truth merely as sarcastic witticisms to be hurled at his fellows, or as innocent-sounding questions that lead them into self-incrimination. But revealing the mud around him does not elevate Tom: a morass can't be used as a springboard; a morass sucks one in. Phil, too, with all his money, is a loser. "I like being rich, okay," he boasts. "I need money. I want two of everything. Cars, boats, women, etc., etc. Around expensive things I get a hard-on, turned on. I want them." But having two of everything is divisive and can be almost as frustrating and depleting as having none. Another time, Phil admits: "I'm so bored half the time, it's killing me." The two things that console him are driving his sports car at suicidal speeds, and girls, mostly very young ones. And something else: "Sit and replay the old games in my head . . . Sometimes I think that's the only thing I can still feel . . . that championship season . . . nothing matched it, nothing."

What Miller does is to let his characters interact and gradually reveal themselves. This is, of course, a time-honored basic technique of realistic drama, but Miller handles it with admirable assurance. The two pegs on which he hangs the action are the basketball reunion and the mayoral race, which permits the conversations to oscillate between the blissfully nostalgic retrospect of victory and the somewhat parlous prospect of collaborating on George's re-election. The coach looms as chief strategist in both contests, and the parallel between the game and life is thus forcefully posited. But now things begin to emerge. George is unmasked as an incompetent politically and even humanly: Marion, his wife, has been carrying on with Phil and, indeed, a good many others in town. It comes out, too, that Phil would rather support the Jew, Sharmen; that James, whom his own young son considers mediocre, would as soon run himself for mayor; that the boys are about to bring in outside experts to run

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George's campaign and so cut out James; that Tom is not a hopeful but a hopeless alcoholic; that the coach, who claims to have fully recovered from his operation, is actually in precarious health; and that Phil, with all his money, has very little to look forward to.

The game-life parallel begins to fall apart. In the game they were all one harmonious team; now they are squabbling, undermining, insulting, betraying, hitting and even threatening to shoot one another as the evening and the flow of liquor progresses. In this respect, *That Championship Season* is reminiscent of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?,* where a friendly get-together deteriorates into a drunken orgy of hate and self-hate; but Albee, despite some attempts at making his play transcendent through references to the decline of western culture, is still dealing essentially with private, personal problems. Miller's play, however, takes on a genuinely social character by capturing both the private and the public lives of a town as they intermingle and uneasily fuse. Thus, for example, although Miller ostensibly writes a play about men only, he deftly intimates what the town's women are like. There is George's wife, Marion, with her joyless promiscuity; Phil's Claire, who, in collaboration with her mother, lives the gay life of the rich bitch with continual travel and sex abroad; and James's Helen, who mass-produces babies and sacrifices her talent for painting to her monomaniacal motherhood. Then there was the more sophisticated Miss Morris, the music teacher, with whom the coach had a long-lasting relationship but whom he could not marry because she would not convert to Catholicism and because he had to take care of his old mother. There is even Mary, epileptic and retarded, with whom the boys used to have gang bangs, and who was recently brutally raped. As the feminine side of town comes gradually to life, it too seems to be populated with losers.

Is it, then, a case of the wonderful old basketball days versus the measly, bickering, unfulfilled days of adult life? No; Miller eventually brings life and the game together again in painful harmony. Tom reveals why Martin left town and never came back to these reunions: because the championship was won crookedly. There had been a superb Negro center on the opposing team, and Martin, on instructions from the coach, broke his ribs ("I told him to get tough under the boards" is how the coach euphemizes it), and that is how the trophy was captured. Now it all fits together: both life and basketball are a fraud, the one merely extending and perpetuating the other. Yet Miller does not allow things to become quite that simplistic, either. He makes the coach himself phrase his philosophy differently at different moments. There is the noble version, when the coach explains why he did not marry: "I never had the time. Teaching the game was not just a profession, it was a vocation. Like a priest. Devoted my life to excellence . . . superiority. . . . You, boys, are my real trophies, never forget that, never." Soon after, there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

comes a more equivocal version, a stoic-masochistic one: "Pain. The price is pain. Endurance. You endure pain to win, a law of life, no other way, none. The pain in my gut. It's been there all my life. It's good to hurt. The mind overcomes pain. You keep your marriage, George. Hold on to it." (It is, be it noted, in such incomplete sentences that much of the play's dialogue unfolds—the syntactic incompleteness becoming the objective correlative of the primitiveness and untidiness of these lives.) Finally, we get the third and ungarnished version: "Exploiting a man's weakness is the name of the game. He can't move to the left, you left him to death. Can't stop a hook, you hook away on him. Find his weak spot and go after it. Punish him with it. I drilled that into you a thousand times!" This is the coach's reply to Tom's accusation that they are smearing Sharmen with his long-dead Communist relative; forthwith, we see the application of this sports philosophy to the game of life. It is to be stated even more bluntly by the coach at the very last: "You have to hate to win, it takes hate to win." Dedication, pain, hate; it isn't any one of them but all three together. Two parts bad to one part good—that, alas, is the final truth about the games of basketball and life as they are played in Scranton, Pa., and just possibly elsewhere, too.

The game theory of life is, above all, immature, as the play copiously illustrates. For in stressing the team, the in-group, development is stunted in two directions: toward the single self, leading to self-reliance, self-cultivation, individualism; and toward public-spiritedness, ecumenism, world-citizenship. The coach and at least three of his boys are arrested at the level of parent and child servicing each other's physical and emotional needs—which the sports family, the coach-father and player-children, reiterates and prolongs into life. Miller lets us feel the weakness of unhappy families as paralleling the weakness of the in-group's morals and morale in contrast to those of Sharmen. Tom, as we have seen, does not really emancipate himself; only Martin has done that, but we do not know at what price.

This immaturity is neatly epitomized in various small but telling ways. I have mentioned the coach's need to look after his mother as his pretext for not marrying; more revealingly, Phil bursts out at one point: "You know the only woman I ever loved? . . . my mother, fuck the psychiatrists . . . my mother is the only . . . woman I ever knew. The rest are all cunts." (Ellipses the author's. This line, by the way, was loudly applauded by the opening-night audience on Broadway.) These men are inveterate mother's boys. Even more infantile is the unwillingness to accept as true what one doesn't want to believe. When Tom, mocking the coach's semiliterate eulogy of the Greek ideal, observes that the Greeks were homosexual, the coach explodes: "The Greeks homos? Not the Greeks, maybe the Romans but not the Greeks! Don't come around me with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that liberal bullshit. I won't listen." "I won't listen" is arguably the motto of the play: the boys will be boys and hear and believe only what they want to hear and believe. George lets himself be convinced that Marion did it with Phil only to raise money for her dear husband, James is convinced that he spilled the beans to George just so that the truth would bring them all together again, Phil is readily persuaded that James would never hurt him intentionally. And the play ends with the coach and his boys pulling together against Sharmen, against good government, progress and truth, against anyone who isn't one of them.

Miller is skillful with some important devices. He knows how to make a character or a situation gradually take on a different complexion through a casual remark here, a small revelation there. Thus Marion appears at first as a woman who committed a single indiscretion; but, by accretion of information and the change of the coach's way of talking about her, she ends up as a slut. James's dedication to his slowly dying father is spoken of in Act One as a great personal sacrifice, such as, the coach declares, not many would have made. In the second act, this sacrifice, which James uses as an excuse for his underachieving, earns only a hollow, rote approbation from George: "We all have great respect for you, James, you sacrificed, well, you know." By the third act, however, when James complains that his father never showed him the slightest respect in return for his sacrifice, the Coach lets him have it: "Whine. . . . Bitch and whine and blame your life on everybody. You got the eyes of a beggar." Meanwhile we also heard from Tom that "James never did anything out of . . . love. The word embarrasses him." For James is "just obedient. An obedient man. Press a button . . .". There it is again: obedience, a child's virtue; another great manly sacrifice was, like the coach's devotion to his mother, just infantile doing what one is told to do.

Feeling is immature in the boys. When George learns of his wife's infidelity, he cries out uncomprehendingly, "Marion. Unfaithful. I'm the Mayor, for Chrissakes!" This is pathetic—but for the shallowness, not the depth, of its feeling. What are feelings to George, anyway? When he wants to prove to the others that he has them, he exclaims: "I can understand . . . understand what makes a man take a gun, go up a tower, and start blowing people apart. I know the feeling. All smiles, huh? I have rage in me . . . I hate like everybody, hate . . . things." This is the horrible confirmation of the coach's "it takes hate to win"; yet it is also pathetic. Beautifully, Miller makes genuine pathos out of such inferior feelings, especially of that lame, evasive last word, "things": George does not even have the courage of his hates.

Another device Miller uses unobtrusively but compellingly is the parallel. The key revelation of the breaking of the black center's ribs is prefigured by an incident the coach recalls: "A communist

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

came through here, 1930 maybe. Bad times. Poverty like a plague. . . . He came to organize. We broke his legs . . . with a two-by-four and sent him packing." So, too, Phil makes a semi-pitying, semi-contemptuous statement about his father, an ignorant immigrant who had only hard work and premature death out of the fortune he amassed—and Phil doesn't realize how this parallels his own boring himself to death with his fast women, fast cars, and the fast demise he is courting.

What emerges is the picture of a society that makes a fetish out of success, but does not know what to do with it or even what it really is. It recognizes success, ultimately, only in material terms. However proudly the coach may talk about the Bach and Shakespeare he heard in his father's house, when he wants to prove the incontestability and value of that championship season he must reach for that prominently displayed trophy and exclaim: "I carved your names in silver, last forever, forever . . ." This echoes his earlier tribute to Teddy Roosevelt: "They carved that man's face in a mountain," which is typical also of the misinformation he frequently spreads. Concrete proof is what is wanted, and Miller deftly brings on a set of concrete, pragmatic evidences of championship with which to cement anew these perennial basketballers' unholy alliance.

First is a recording of the last few seconds of a broadcast of that championship game. The coach plays this record that is cracked with age and scratchy from constant replay, but it is evidence, concrete evidence. The boys listen to it raptly, then burst into the school song, and Phil and George even end up crying in each other's arms. Tangible or, at any rate, audible success. And sloppy sentimentality, with grass-roots America singing "Another victory for Fillmore"—a school named for a president whose face could at best be carved in a molehill.

After the aural, the ocular evidence. As the coach admonishes them, "No way a man can do it alone. Got to belong to something more than yourself," the boys proceed to arrange themselves around that twenty-year-old, ill-gotten trophy for the annual photograph. Even the unconverted Tom smiles for the coach's camera. Then the boys insist on taking a picture of the coach holding the cup. To make him smile, Tom, recalling the coach's earlier puzzlement by that word, encourages him ironically, "Say cunnilingus," but what dent can Thersites make in Achilles? The lights fade, and only a spotlight is left enshrining the coach. James, the photographer, announces, "I got you, Coach," and the remark is rich in subliminal meanings. The coach reponds with the curtain line: "Yeah." The complacency of grass-roots America is engraved on that silver monosyllable.

Did the coach speak true when, early in the play, he declared, "We are the country, boys"? I think the characters are truly representative, created with sympathy, authentic. While Miller re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prehends their outlook and behavior, he allows them, nevertheless, a fleeting self-cognizance, a bit of misdirected decency, some juvenile affection. Even as he makes us aware of their racism, crudeness, jejuneness, he also makes us feel the pity of this entrapment by the pettiness, barrenness, monotony of small-town existence. An author who can be both surgically probing and charitable, both muck-raking and forgiving, performs that marriage of incisiveness and generosity from which truths are born. Miller's accuracy as a reported is mirrored in the persuasive shabbiness of the language. The incomplete sentences, lacunas and aposiopeses, awkward repetitions, omnipresent clichés, all that invincible prosaism that can nevertheless stumble onto some sort of clumsy dignity—these and other traits of speech are instinct with authenticity. Most interesting, perhaps, is Miller's avoidance of that folksy poetry with which writers tend to redeem the speech of plain people. That method is no more wrong than plain folk are incapable of unconscious poetry, yet I admire Miller's refusal to make use of it and still succeeding in making his characters fascinate us. He charges his dialogue with deliberate or inadvertent humor, self-revelation, conscious or unconscious, and the ominous ring of human hollowness. But, for all that, he does not encourage glib feelings of superiority in the audience: they recognize too much of themselves in these characters.

To one of them, however, Miller does grant a spurious poetry. Some of the coach's lines have a certain afflatus, a grandiose rhythm, obsessive refrains, and some fairly conventional but charismatic metaphors. This is true especially at the play's end, where the coach is given what amounts to a virtually two-page monologue. But the poetic heightening is undercut by a mixture of nostalgia for a past that was even more reactionary then the present and a grandiloquence that is more than faintly self-serving. The speech begins with a glowing evocation of the coach's father and the town as it was in his time; it ends with this prognostication about the mayoral race:

> You won't lose, boys—because I won't let you lose. I'll whip your ass to the bone, drive you into the ground. Your soul belongs to God but your ass belongs to me, remember that one, yes sir, we can do it, we are going to win because we can't lose, dare not lose, won't lose, lose is not in our vocabulary! I shaped you, boys, never forget that. I ran you till the blisters busted, ran you right into perfection, bloody socks and all; you couldn't put on your jocks, awkward, all legs, afraid, a mistake a second. I made you winners. I made you winners.

There is a horrible beauty in that, after all.

But in general, along with the purposive leanness of the dialogue, there is even an almost complete absence of stage directions and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instructions about how a line is to be read (e.g., anxiously, softly, etc.). Though there is nothing wrong with such hints to actors, directors and readers, there is also something fine and fastidious about refraining from them. It allows the director, actor or reader[1] to come to his own conclusions and fill in his own details; yet the movement of a speech is always so clearly plotted that this leeway will not alter basic meanings or imperil communication.

In Joseph Papp's production, first mounted at the Public Theatre, then transferred to the Booth on Broadway, the production values are all of the utmost artistry. A. J. Antoon's staging is as meticulous as it is resourceful, creating an elaborate choreography of movements that first delight us by their unexpectedness, then delight us again by their absolute rightness. A drunk falls down a flight of stairs almost too spectacularly; an angry man goes out on the porch to simmer down, and repeatedly sticks his head back in through the window to hurl further invective at his offender; a bit of violence erupts so swiftly that it is over before it is really fathomed; all these events have an uncanny aroma of credibility, of really happening and happening for the first time. The rhythms of speech are cogently orchestrated, motion flows freely across the entire stage, and each entrance and exit has its particular shape and flavor.

The set, by Santo Loquasto, is right to the last detail. The tacky curtains and doilies, the Persian rugs and flowered wallpaper, the framed photographs of teams, the Grand Rapids mahogany furniture, the archetypal dowel post and balusters of the staircase spiraling to the second floor—all share in a fadedness and mustiness that no amount of cleaning or polishing could assuage. It is bourgeois respectability going to seed, but gallantly hanging on to every graspable vestige. The very layout of the room, with its unequal spaces to which further nooks and crannies adhere like pockmarks and warts, generates an aura of mixed coziness and embarrassment. It all exudes an uncertain yellowness, which it seems to have absorbed from bygone lives and is now breathing back into the current ones. Ian Calderon's lighting cannily contributes to this impression.

But the ultimate triumph of *That Championship Season* is in its performances. The five actors could scarcely be surpassed individually, but are even more astounding together. One might perhaps object that some look a little younger or older than their prescribed ages, but that is as nothing to their perfection in every other respect. As the mayor, Charles Durning gives off exaggerated self-assurance with every paper-thin smile and briskly tossed-off conviviality. Durning has a jerkiness of speech and angularity of motion that jut out incriminatingly from under the assumed fluidity. Even crushed with pain or maddened with wrath, he retains that puppetlike pettiness that makes him in equal measure ludicrous and pitiful. As James, the junior-high-school principal, Michael McGuire conveys magisterially

[1] *That Championship Season* has recently been published by Atheneum. $6.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that ingrained mediocrity sweatily straining to please. Even his pomposity has a thin, brittle tinkle in it, and his slightly squeaky voice seems to curl upward as it slowly gathers courage. At bay, he fights back with the inept but desperately serious anger of an aging tenor with a second-rate opera company in a grand, dramatic moment. As Tom, his younger, alcoholic brother—the softly sardonic voice of defeated reasonableness—Walter McGinn gives a magnificently balanced performance, not allowing the justness of his perceptions to blind us to his hopeless decay, and infusing his genuine likableness with a chilling sense of the sodden impotence beneath. His drunkard's titubations are flawless in their underlying somnambulistic agility, and his cascading down the stairs is splendid and alarming.

Richard A. Dysart's Coach is no less superb. Dysart conveys the maniacal aspects of the man without losing any of his equally relevant joviality. Though he can, at times, sound and look like a lesser Old Testament prophet, at other times, as when he pries esuriently into the details of Phil's intercourse with Marion, he becomes childlike, almost Puckish. Dysart wisely eschews the extremes of distastefulness or cuteness that the part could seduce one into, and makes a marvelously kaleidoscopic jumble out of probity and mean prejudice. He declines Phil's invitation to watch basketball on color TV: "They all shoot down at the basket. Not my game," and sees to it that the line sounds too funny to be moving; then continues with "it's not the white man's game," in tones of such disarmingly serio-comic distaste that the underlying nastiness hits us only a second or two later.

But the most dazzling presence on stage—*primus inter pares*—is Paul Sarvino as Phil. He makes the "dumb dago" shrewd, warmhearted, ruthless, amiably oafish and coldly cynical all at once. I cannot begin to describe how the actor can convey that many conflicting and contradictory characteristics with a single slow expression, one quick remark, or a solitary dismissing gesture—but he does. He makes you feel that everything comes from very deep in him, but also that he is just a huge, overgrown baby whose innermost core is right under the skin. He is so simple, so obvious, and then, suddenly, we don't know where this weeping has come from, or whether that inflection derives from silliness or great subtlety. And his comic timing is always exemplary. From all five actors we get ensemble acting of the highest order, which could hold its own against the finest acting aggregations of the world.

Jason Miller has written a first-rate commercial theatre piece. It is not quite profound or venturesome or novel enough to make it a work of art, but it is the very best example of the sort of play that keeps a commercial theatre meaningfully and honorably alive. If it cannot have a long life on Broadway, Broadway itself no longer deserves to live.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

B. H. FUSSELL

Waiting for Tutankhamen: London Theatre, Summer 1972

"THE STATE OF THE NATION is at its worst since Suez," *The Spectator* warned in mid-summer. Belfast, another Dock Strike and maybe a General Strike, resignation of Cabinet Member Maudling, inflation soaring and the pound sinking, the Common Market entailing "loss of British sovereignty": seldom has the threat of national bankruptcy seemed so near nor the state of public morale so low. *The Spectator* called for action, but its allusion to Suez underlines—ironically—the contrast between Empire and England. "The trouble is," one taxi-driver said, "England's got so much history lying around that you can't help stumbling over it." You can't help observing the vast emptiness of India House or noticing that Humbers have ceded to Opels, Fish 'N Chips to Colonel Sanders' Kentucky Fried Chicken. You can't help feeling that under successive tourist invasions the populace more and more adopt roles as loveable eccentrics in a period piece of Victoriana, where Parliament debates the maltreatment of pet turtles shipped from Turkey, where Letters to *The Times* protest the awarding of goldfish in plastic bags as prizes ("This practise is wrong, for most of the fish may go to homes where nothing is known about the proper way to keep them"), where *The Daily Mail* chronicles plumbing troubles at Windsor Castle under the heading "The Royal Flush," and where Heathrow Airport warns international passengers—many with minimal English—"kindly keep your self-help trolleys away from the carousels."

Everywhere there is a sense of waiting, of marking time. Cinema queues at Leicester Square wait for a vision of the future in *A Clock-Work Orange* and ignore the scruffy men bearing signs—"The End is Near," "Flee the Wrath to Come." Unlikely queues at the British Museum number thousands who only stand and wait—four to six hours—for a glimpse of the golden past in the Museum's showbiz attraction, "The Treasures of Tutankhamen." A year or two ago I had trouble finding an up-to-date guidebook to Egypt; today every window on Charing Cross Road displays Tutankhamen posters, medallions, paperbacks, even T-shirts printed "Tutankhamen is A-Head."

There were no queues at the theatres. If last year's theatrical season reflected London's cultural obsession with nostalgia, this year's revealed necrophilia. Last season dazzled theatre audiences with a display of technical virtuosity and imaginative creation that only a vital

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

coalition of director, playwright, and performer could produce. There were new plays by Pinter, Osborne, Nichols; productions by Peter Brook and Peter Hall; performances by Gielgud, Richardson, Redgrave, Guinness, Scofield, Plummer, Alan Bates and Alan Badel. But this year Peter Brook is in Europe and the Royal Shakespeare Company in the doldrums; Olivier is invisible (except as an actor in *Long Day's Journey*) and the National Theatre Company in disarray, awaiting its new permanent director, Peter Hall; Alan Bates is Butleying in New York; and the elegant drag-queen Danny La Rue has vacated the Palace for Jesus Christ, Superstar.

This season London suffered from a drought of new plays. With the exception of Tom Stoppard's *Jumpers,* they were mostly dry thoughts in a dry season—a mere crumb like *Lloyd George Knew My Father* (wasting the talents of no less than Ralph Richardson and Peggy Ashcroft), or a rehash like *I Claudius* (starving the talent of David Warner), or a plastic fruitbowl like *Gone With the Wind.* More than ever London theatres depended upon musical imports from America, senile bedroom farces, and revivals of revivals. Of course the glory of British theatre is that it has a body of plays to be revived and a body of performers capable of renewing dramatic moments of the past. But past perfect declines into present indifferent, and theatrical convention into clichés. Besides the slump in productivity, the dramatic products themselves too often lacked energy, dynamics, pizzaz. The producers' increased reliance on "packaging" suggested their unconscious acknowledgement of the emotional poverty and general shabbiness of the goods—suggested, in fact, a current bankruptcy of the imagination.

Peter Brook in *The Empty Space* describes why it is so difficult to make past works come alive on stage and why "The Deadly Theatre," as he calls it, takes so eagerly to Shakespeare—as eagerly as haute-culture audiences to boredom. As if illustrating his text, the companies at the Old Vic and Aldwych seemed to compete for the title of Best Embalmer of Shakespeare's corpus. First prize goes to the Old Vic for its mummification of *Richard II.* The effect of the entire play is best summarized by the two drama critics in Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound:*

BIRDBOOT: Has it started yet?
MOON: Yes.
BIRDBOOT: Are you sure?
MOON: It's a pause.
BIRDBOOT: You can't start with a *pause!*

Under David William's direction, Ronald Pickup's "mockery king of snow" took such an interminable time melting that one longed to mop him up and get on with it.

Runner-up was *The Merchant of Venice* at the Aldwych, trans-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ferred from Stratford. Terry Hand's direction was highly praised by London critics for giving us Shakespeare "straight," a hit I suppose at Jonathan Miller's Yiddische *Merchant* of 1969. But Hand's *Merchant* began with a Still Life, moved through a sequence of Living Statues, and ended with a Déjà Vu. The very setting resembled a cloth-lined sarcophagus, in which Portia's three caskets were blown-up into life-size mummy cases, looking as if they were Tutankhamen rejects. Where Martin Esslin found "a scrupulously fair, exact rendering of the text," I found an Anthology of Shakespeariana, in which Portia and her maid run barefoot like poor Ophelia, Shylock brandishes his knife like Titus Andronicus, and Launcelot Gobbo runs mad in the manner of Lear's Fool. "Nothing is good without respect," says Portia, but nobody marked her.

Another Stratford transfer to the Aldwych, *Othello,* ran a close third. In fact, all three productions are examples of Erector-Set Shakespeare, a boxed set of interchangeable parts which can build up to twenty-five different plays. All three suffered from the tendency of the director to literalize, to reduce the tenuous images of the imagination to the physical and tangible—a kind of disease like King Midas' Touch or Disneylanditis. In *Richard,* for example, gestures literalized language, so that when Richard says "Let us sit upon the ground/ And tell sad stories . . ." everybody sat. In *Merchant,* the line "There is a monastery two miles off" provided the pretext for a chorus of monks to sing "Tell me, where is fancy bred?", by which reasoning *Measure for Measure* should have the Vienna Boys Choir.

So in *Othello,* director John Barton cluttered the stage with mid-nineteenth-century bric-a-brac, all prop and no substance. Iago dashes "wet" water from a stage fountain, smokes real cigars, sets up a tripod camera to take Othello's wedding group; Roderigo equips himself with squash racquet and violin case; Cyprus appears a Turkish Delight of street musicians and harem girls. But unfortunately the realism of Iago's cigarillos, for example, leads the audience to speculate inappropriately on obvious fakeries: Othello's make-up or his peculiar accent. We are jolted by a literalization of metaphor when Othello says "Put out the light, and then put out the light" to *two candles.* We are baffled by a sexualization of the entire murder scene: why one wonders is Othello naked, except for a shifty loin cloth, and why does he strangle his bride in the missionary position?

Characteristically, the director has sacrificed structure to detail and thus subverted a good idea: his emphasis upon a formalized military context does help clarify the play's relations between a general and his subordinates and between a military hero and the Venetian citizens. And the idea is nicely supported in Julia Oman's design of a unit set that turns from Venetian street scene to Cypriot fort and of costumes that deliberately evoke memories of *Beau Geste* and *Gunga Din.* Nor are the cinematic allusions irrelevant. Exploiting this mili-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tary movie imagery, Emrys James creates the most exciting Iago I have seen by making him a type of soldier familiar through dozens of B films about GI Joes and their Limey equivalents: the Cockney (read Brooklyn) wiseguy, twerpy and cynical, a loudmouth joker who gets his kicks from screwing his betters. The audience's instant recognition of this cinematic type makes plausible Iago's wholesale ability to deceive and lends him immediate credence as an embodiment of evil in its contemporary form of banality.

In contrast, Charles Marowitz' attempt to make the play politically relevant rendered his version, *An Othello,* at the Open Space Theatre pathetically remote, vulgar without being funny. Here was House Negro Othello and Field Negro Iago and Honky-Whore Desdemona and lots of talk about "that Coon General and his White Pussy." But if only Marowitz had had the imagination of his convictions, he would have dropped Shakespeare and taken off on his own, as Stoppard did in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead,* since Marowitz' wholly interpolated scenes are by far the best. Brabantio's Complaint, for example, in the mode of Jewish stand-up comic. Erecting my own Shakespeare Set, I suddenly perceived that here was the perfect Jew for *The Merchant of Venice:* he should be, like Iago, a comic type from the popular media who shocks us by breaking out of his comic format and turning nasty in his own person.

Shakespeare's works were not the only ones to be buried under too much "furniture," period or modern. Interestingly, even a play thought to epitomize naturalistic drama of the ashcan sort, Gorki's *Lower Depths,* is devitalized in the RSC revival of it by excess physicalization. David Jones as director concentrates so attentively on the flophouse setting and eradicates so successfully all distinctions between men and things that he lets the conflict go. His failure to energize the opposition between Luka and Satin leaves us with a dusty collection of sad sacks to whom nothing can happen. Even though the shocker of 1902 reads now like flophouse Chekhov, the RSC's magnificent revival of Gorki's *Enemies* last year shows what can be done with the Chekhovian tone implicit in Gorki's work. Gorki himself demanded that the original company of The Moscow Art Theatre producing *Lower Depths* evoke two responses: fear and laughter. Otherwise, the audience is tempted to agree with Oscar Wilde that "the brotherhood of man is no mere poet's dream, it is a most depressing and humiliating reality."

The National Theatre's "Mobile Production" of John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* escaped one kind of trap only to fall into another. Director Ronald Joffe achieved a mobile setting but insisted on a style so declamatory that the potential heady stuff of incest, treated by Ford with the titillating "ultra-violence" of *A Clock-Work Orange,* came out as static as a church pageant. Not even Giovanni's climactic entrance—he appears clutching in both hands his sister's bleeding and still-pulsing heart—raised more than a snicker.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Also for the National, Jonathan Miller selected this year Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* for dissection in the Miller Morgue. Dr. Miller treated Sheridan's text as if it were some pox-riddled body that would demonstrate conclusively the sickness of the eighteenth-century scene. Critics mentioned Hogarth, but Swift was the man Miller called upon as witness—the Swift of Strephon "Repeating in his amorous fits/ Oh! *Celia, Celia, Celia* shits!" Thus Miller's Lady Sneerwell, her pate entirely bald, is discovered making her toilet—cloacally. The exceedingly tacky furnishings of her bedroom convey the message that countesses lived as badly as costermongers, only with greater affectation. Thus Sir Benjamen Backbite appears publicly in hair curlers, and prodigal son Charles inhabits the very Lowest Depths of Gin Lane.

Straightforward neo-realistic productions of two "modern" revivals worked better because less pretentious and more congruous. The National staged the first English production of Hecht and MacArthur's *The Front Page* and went mad for Americana. Credits listed ketchup by Heinz, Listerine by Lambert, Camels by Reynolds Tobacco. Their playbill was an eight-page mockup of a 1928 edition of the *Chicago Herald and Examiner;* their setting was a Norman Rockwell rendition of smoke-filled pressroom with poker-playing "characters," roll-top desks, signs saying "Keep Cool with Coolidge." Although well directed and well acted (especially by Denis Quilley and Alan MacNaughton as the Pat O'Brien-Adolphe Menjou team), the play seemed almost a parody of itself as a result of English imitations of a hard-boiled Chicago accent. Not inappropriately this Englishmen's view of an Urban Western recalled the zany America of Brecht.

Journey's End demonstrated even better than *The Front Page* the dictum that one generation's realism is a later generation's romance. Performed in 1928 (with an unknown actor named Olivier), R. C. Sherriff's play was one of the first to dramatize the shattering effects of the first world war. Revived at the Mermaid this spring, the play unexpectedly so delighted critics and audiences that it moved to the West End. But the performance I saw was so low-pressured and monotonous that I suspect the delights were extra-theatrical: instead of horror, nostalgia. The heroes behave like Houseman's golden lads and speak—"How topping to have played for England"—in accents perfectly consonant with those of the romanticist of a later war, Noel Coward, to whom the Mermaid paid current tribute in a musical revue called *Cowardy Custard.*

In contrast to the prevailing somnambulism, two revivals actually accomplished what the word "revival" suggests: a coming back to life and a restoration to vigor. One was John Osborne's adaptation of *Hedda Gabler,* directed by Anthony Page at the Royal Court Theatre. Osborne has given us, at last, a speakable text in idiomatic English and a playable action in believable terms. He takes seriously

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ibsen's dramatic context: "The complexity of the character of Hedda Gabler," Osborne writes, "is richer only if the other characters in the play are also . . . made . . . rich. . . ." Consequently in Page's direction Tesman is not a hopeless fool, nor Brack an utter villain, nor Mrs. Elvsted a complete prig, nor Lovborg an unrelieved slob. Lovborg is made to resemble D. H. Lawrence, so that he is less slob than rough diamond. Hedda, in Jill Bennett's excellent performance, is made into a bitch princess—a wilful romantic more like Scarlet O'Hara than Emma Bovary, childishly selfish and at the same time pitifully vulnerable. "Fundamentally conventional," Ibsen calls her; "A loser," says Osborne. And so the play moves refreshingly towards drawing-room comedy and away from the turgid domestic tragedy of the Bergman production of 1970, which portrayed Hedda as a Freudian psychopath. A fresh look at Ibsen's notes to the play confirms the rightness of the move: "Life is not tragic—Life is ridiculous—And that cannot be borne."

The RSC effected the most spectacular recovery of a work buried by the long neglect of nineteenth-century drama when it revived in 1970 Dion Boucicault's *London Assurance* of 1841. Reopened this year at the New Theatre, the play could stand as a model of how to invigorate "dated" melodrama and mechanical farce with new emotional energy that quickens both modes. Ronald Eyre's adaptation and direction builds upon the "good feeling" that he perceives is the play's subject and its emotional sustenance; it is "good feeling" which nourishes the comic elaboration of love affairs, including the "love-affair of Sir Harcourt Courtly and his mirror." As the "elderly Narcissist" dandy, Donald Sinden's manipulation of his audience is unsurpassed: he makes us laugh when he stares in outraged bafflement or dislocates his dentures by over-pronouncing *"devoir";* but more importantly he makes us believe the man beneath the fop. We delight in his affectations, and the more outrageous the better, because the simple candour of his vanity has enlisted us as fellow conspirators. Similarly Elizabeth Spriggs as the Lady Gay Spanker invests what might be a caricature of a horsewoman with such warmth and good nature that we long to return her affection. This creation of a formalized intimacy between audience and performer—for the moment members of the same club—constitutes the play's success and results from both Boucicault's skill in using theatrical artifices and Eyre's skill in controlling them. The production stands also, then, as an act of criticism of the theatre of naturalistic illusion.

As a new play, Stoppard's *Jumpers* does the same job more directly, in a brilliant exposition of the theatre of hocus-pocus. The National Theatre program quotes a pretended interview with the author:

QUESTION: Is it about people jumping?
ANSWER: Definitely.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

QUESTION: As opposed to metaphorical jumpers?
ANSWER: As opposed to knitwear is what I meant.

For Stoppard language is action: the literal and the metaphorical change places constantly—on stage—and with vertiginous speed. In a travesty of a Whodunnit (see *Sleuth*) and a burlesque of the Professor as Anti-hero (see *Butley*), Stoppard exploits and explodes dramatic stereotypes in a nervy revue style that accommodates the most improbable possibilities: a glamorous musical-comedy star as wife to a seedy professor; a prim secretary as nude trapeze stripper; a department of academic philosophers as acrobatic troupe. Similarly the action encompasses film projections on a giant TV screen, the disposal of a "real" corpse in a six-foot plastic bag, an endlessly entangled lecture on the question " 'Is God?' " (or better, " 'Are God?' "), the accidental shooting of a pet rabbit and the fatal crunching of a turtle.

By means of farce, metaphysics. The wife Dotty, in a nifty performance by Diana Rigg, has become unhinged by the moral implications of the astronauts' moon landing, so that now all moons sound alike: "You saw me standing in June/ January, Allegheny, Moon or July." Mixed moon metaphors are repeated visually on the TV screen: earlier shots of the lunar landscape reappear in a camera closeup of the mountains and craters of Dotty's body, erotically scanned. Husband George, in Michael Hordern's definitive imitation of an awkward-elbowed, nasaloid Oxbridge don, nobly struggles to rid himself by logical means of his belief in an "incredible, indescribable and definitely shifty *God*." Dotty's lover and George's boss, Archie, is the exemplum of the new order: a logical positivist, Archie runs the show—on a global totalitarian scale—with the most ruthless efficiency and justifies human suffering with the cheeriest complacency. George and Archie are loser and loser-who-wins, victim and aggressor, autistic mind and brute body. Like Beckett's dramatic pairs in *End Game* or *Waiting for Godot,* Stoppard's are also halves of a split identity, suffering a post-Cartesian hangover in a schizophrenic world.

However relevant to the modern world in general, Stoppard's scene is specifically now and England. Dotty mutters bits and pieces from the English poets as George drops the names of the English philosophers. Their verbal fragments remind us that there were heroes in those days—adventurer-scholars like Howard Carter, who discovered Tutankhamen's tomb and preserved its treasures for exhibition in the British Museum. Now, while Archie's acrobats and astronauts perform to the tune of "Sentimental Journey," Dotty sings without music, "Goodbye spoony Juney moon."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN

Better Than Tovey?

WHEN I REMARKED A FEW WEEKS AGO to a friend that I was working on a review of the best book about music that I had ever read,[1] the inevitable question was not long in coming: "Better than Tovey?" he asked. The question was inevitable not only because D. F. Tovey's unique gifts of mind and ear have made his work the touchstone by which some of us judge all other writing on music, but also because Rosen, as his title indicates, has the same central interest as Tovey: the genesis and significance of the musical revolution that produced the Viennese classic masterpieces. In fact Tovey's catalyzing influence is so apparent on virtually every page of Rosen's book that the most convenient way to approach Rosen is through a reconsideration of Tovey's achievement.

The heart of that achievement lay in the establishing, once and for all, of three large and closely interrelated truths. The first of these is that the old stereotyped view of Beethoven as a revolutionary bull in an eighteenth-century china shop is completely mistaken. "It is an unfortunate coincidence," wrote Tovey, "that during Beethoven's lifetime the French Revolution was going through what a philosophical historian has ironically described as the formula of actually taking place. In his treatment of art-forms, early and late, Beethoven was no more revolutionary than Mozart, and far more regular than Haydn." The second truth is that the eighteenth-century china shop never existed in the first place. It is the old-fashioned textbook definitions of sonata form, with their misleading stress on the distribution and interrelations of themes, that are responsible for the popular myth that Haydn and Mozart composed by dutifully following (and occasionally violating) a rigid and constricting body of rules: if we actually examine their mature works, we find something very different indeed. "The idea that Beethoven, in such works as [the C sharp minor quartet, Opus 131], 'broke the mould' of the classical forms is fatally well-expressed in that metaphor. There was no mould to break. The art forms of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven were not moulds in which music could be cast, but inner principles by which the music grew. . . . Mozart is no more comfortable in a mould than Richard Strauss." The third and most general of Tovey's truths has to do with the nature and proper function of musical analysis—and, thereby, with the theoretical ways in which Beethoven's relation to

[1] THE CLASSICAL STYLE: HAYDN, MOZART, BEETHOVEN, by *Charles Rosen*. Viking Press. $12.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his great predecessors had been misrepresented. Musical analysis, Tovey argued, has gone astray because it has concerned itself not with the actual progression of sounds that the educated but unprejudiced ear hears in performance but with patterns and correspondences—particularly thematic correspondences—that the ingenious eye can ferret out of the score. "It is of the utmost importance that [the student of musical analysis] should never set down anything that his ear has not recognized apart from the appearance of the printed page. The ear will never learn to recognize subtleties if the power of judgment has been debilitated by *a priori* fancies."

In essay after essay, for thirty years, Tovey rang the changes on these ideas with such intelligence, wit, and breadth of illustration that nothing has ever been the same since. No one now writes books with titles like *Beethoven, the Man Who Freed Music* or speaks of Mozart as the delicate child of the rococo age or patronizes Haydn as "Papa" Haydn. I think it is fair to say that every sensible writer who has subsequently dealt with these matters has had not only to take Tovey into account but to take his work as a point of departure, as what is there to build on and (now and then) to argue against.

Yet I think it is also fair to say that Tovey did not fully answer some of the most important questions he raised. If the real revolution is not the one Beethoven is supposed to have waged against Haydn and Mozart but the one by which the classical or sonata style, as practiced by all three men, came into being, just how and when did that happen? In place of the old thematically-oriented way of talking about sonata form and the classical style Tovey gave us a new and more promising one: "In the sonata style three things are fundamental. . . . These fundamental things are key system and phrase system, both of which can be reduced to technical analysis; and dramatic fitness, which can be discussed only descriptively and analogically, but which constitutes the all-pervading distinction between the sonata style and the earlier non-dramatic, architectural, and decorative styles which culminated in Bach and Handel." But having been told this much, we want to know more: Exactly what changes in key relations and phrasing created the sense of drama essential to the new style? In what works did these first appear? How gradually or suddenly did they take hold? The answers may all be there somewhere, scattered throughout Tovey's many volumes of essays, but I for one have never found them.

Too often Tovey was content merely to produce a musical example, point to it, and then use his new terminology to construct a stunning formulation—without bothering to make clear the precise connections between the example, the terms, and the content of the formulation. Thus he could cite an innocent-looking four bars from a Haydn quartet, announce that "with this passage Haydn completes his resources of harmony," and pass on, leaving the eager reader not much

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the wiser for the well-turned authoritative phrase still ringing in his ears. Or he could print out in full a skeleton version of the 700-bar first movement of the *Eroica* with no further comment than the vague promise that "by means of it the reader will be enabled to apprehend, almost at a glance, the inexhaustible expansive and contractile power of Beethoven's phrase-rhythm." One comes away from Tovey's writings perfectly clear about what was wrong with the view of the classical period embodied in the old way of talking about sonata form, full of brilliant insights about particular works, and with the sure sense of having learned a new and better way of talking. And yet the details of the new view that Tovey's way of talking is intended to reveal remain stubbornly unclear. For it is just when we want him to draw from his particular analyses a full and positive generalization about the ways in which phrasing or key relations or rhythm changed in the late eighteenth century that he is most likely to slip away: like Coleridge he has a habit of not being there when we need him most.

To my knowledge, there has until now been no writer with the combination of historical learning and critical insight needed to fill out and consolidate Tovey's view of the classical revolution. But now there is Charles Rosen, best known as a pianist, who adds to those virtues two others that Tovey also possessed: experience as a performer and wide literary culture. (It should be said immediately, however, that Rosen, unlike Tovey, never allows his knowledge of literature to lead him into self-indulgent digressions or donnish obfuscations: he uses it sparingly, unpretentiously, and always illuminatingly.) Rosen has written the book that I, and perhaps other readers of Tovey, have been waiting for, and I believe that its publication is an event of great importance to anyone who listens to music seriously. That such an apparently difficult and specialized book should have received a National Book Award has raised a few eyebrows, and so it is perhaps worth insisting that despite its rather forbidding appearance—460 large pages of text, including a great deal of music type—*The Classical Style* is very definitely for the intelligent general reader, not for the specialist alone. It is indeed intellectually difficult, as any ambitious book on a complex subject is bound to be, and it is specialized in the sense that Rosen, in order to buttress his general view of the classical period, refers to and quotes more pieces of music than most non-specialists are likely to have at their fingertips. But these are hardly defects, considering the benefits to be gained. The best way to read it is to go straight through, skipping the analyses of pieces one is not familiar with, in order to get hold of Rosen's argument; then, as one gets to know more of the music, the book can be returned to again and again, and the omitted analyses read and enjoyed, both in themselves and for their contribution to the argument. It's hard to imagine a more sensitive and helpful guide to this music than Rosen: he more than earned his prize, and now that Norton has issued a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paperback edition of *The Classical Style,* it is to be hoped that he will reach as wide an audience as he deserves.

Unfortunately, the worst part of the book is the beginning: four-and-a-half obscure and labored pages in which Rosen ponders whether or not one can legitimately talk about artistic styles. While admitting that the originality and integrity of the classical style were "felt very early" by contemporary critics like E. T. A. Hoffmann, he nonetheless feels he must warn us that "the concept of a style does not correspond to an historical fact but answers a need: it creates a mode of understanding." "The greatest danger" in thinking in terms of artistic styles is "confusion of levels," that is, confusing "the style of a small group" with "the more 'anonymous' style of an era," which can "only lead to methodological chaos." But then it turns out that "this distinction . . . is harder to make in fact than in theory," and even that "the style of a group and the style of an age may sometimes be legitimately confused" since "a group-style often appears to realize the imperfectly formed aspirations of the age." And so on for several more paragraphs, until Rosen works himself around to feeling that it's all right to go ahead and write about the classical style after all since "what unites Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven" is "their common understanding of the musical language which they did so much to formulate and to change," and thus their "unity of style is therefore indeed a fiction, but one which the composers themselves helped to create."

No one should be put off by all this. Unlike most writers who begin books in this way, once Rosen has made his gesture towards theory he feels perfectly free to break off his ponderings forever and announce abruptly: "The musical language which made the classical style possible is that of tonality." He then goes on, in the remaining pages of the first chapter, to give a brief but very lucid account of classical tonality and to show how the strengthening of the polarity between tonic and dominant in the mid-eighteenth century opened up opportunities for a sharpness and clarity of tonal contrast unknown in Baroque music.

In his next chapter, which seems at first like a digression but turns out not to be, Rosen examines the theories of sonata form that were Tovey's favorite target. But he goes beyond Tovey in two important ways. First, while Tovey blamed "the inadequacy of orthodox doctrine on musical forms" on the doctrine's having been "contemporaneous with the compositions and . . . accordingly hostile to all but the easiest conventions," Rosen shows that the real trouble was that the doctrine was formulated only after the classical style was dead, in the first decades of the Romantic era: the reason that writers since Czerny have usually distorted sonata form by defining it as a melodic structure is that by Czerny's time (1840) the classical articulation of structure through dramatic tonal contrast had given way to the Romantics' elevation of melody. Moreover, as Rosen also shows, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Romantics' theoretical misconceptions had practical consequences for their own composing:

> A description of the sonata in fundamentally melodic terms was as unsuited to the eighteenth century's more dramatic structures as the long-breathed melodies of the nineteenth century were inapt for the late eighteenth-century forms. The sonata was as archaic in 1840 as the Baroque fugue in Haydn's day: unfortunately the prestige of Beethoven and, to some extent, of Mozart was so great as to prevent a free adaptation of the form to entirely different purposes comparable to the classical composers' adaptation of the fugue. There was no Baroque composer who weighed upon Haydn as Beethoven did upon Schumann.

The second way in which Rosen goes beyond Tovey's attack on the theories of sonata form is by bringing it up to date. After disposing of the Romantic theory, he goes on to deal in turn with more recent ones that have stressed tonal rather than melodic structure, with the "linear analysis" of the controversial Heinrich Schenker, and with the "diminution technique" currently so popular with serialists, by which a whole work is seen as generated by a single short motif. Though admitting that these later theories may perhaps be less inadequate than the traditional one, Rosen shows that they too make the fatal mistake of setting up one musical element as the determining factor of the form and then treating the others as more or less arbitrary. In the tonal theories "rhythm is given short shrift, and themes are absurdly seen as subsidiary—decorations added to emphasize, or even to hide, a more basic structure." The motivic theories completely ignore the temporal dimension: "too often, the music could be played backward without affecting the analysis." Schenker's theory that "the structure of every tonal work is a linear descent toward the tonic note, and the piece as a whole is the flesh that is put on this skeleton," at least takes account of the music's temporal direction, but Schenker neglects rhythm to such an extent that "it makes no difference to one of his analyses if a piece is fast or slow." Perhaps even more seriously, for Schenker "all forms—fugue, *Lied,* sonata, rondo—from 1650 to 1900 are merely differently adapted versions of the long-range linear structure, and a composer's choice of the 'apparent' form takes on an arbitrary coloring."

The whole chapter is brilliant, and Rosen's final judgment on Schenker and the motif-chasers is so clear, eloquent, and unanswerable—as well as being crucial to an understanding of the book's argument and method—that I can't resist quoting it at some length:

> Above all we must avoid the ludicrous suggestion of a secret art, the idea that composers (only the great ones, naturally) wrote their music by an esoteric process like motivic development, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arranged it into easily understandable forms like sonatas and rondos so that the dim-witted public could grasp it without too much difficulty. This notion, advanced by Schenker and lesser critics like Réti, of an exterior and basically trivial form imposed for the sake of clarity upon a more fundamental process, will not bear even passing scrutiny: it does not correspond to the psychology of any composer—surely not of Haydn, who had not a trace of the conspirator in his nature and whose compositional technique is never *sub rosa,* or of Beethoven, whose disregard for the listening comfort of his public is sufficiently evident in many works; nor, above all, does it bear any relation to even the most perceptive musician's experience of listening to music. It is not true that themes, modulations, and changes of texture are superficial phenomena, less fundamental than diminution technique. This absurdity can be avoided only if a truly intimate relation—not just a marriage of convenience—can be shown between the motivic development and the larger elements of form.

The priorities of hearing must be respected. When relations between themes exist (and they are indeed crucial in the classical period), we ought to know whether they are clarified by the connecting material—that is, if they are part of the discursive logic of the music—or if they are only part of the texture, in which case they are not necessarily less important, but their effect is more an indirect appeal to the sensibility through the total sound of the piece as well as a unifying device. Most important of all, when there is a relation between the details of a work and the larger structure, how is this relation made audible? When there is a correspondence between the detail and the structure, merely to uncover it in the score is insufficient: we must be able to claim that it has always been heard, without being put into words perhaps, but with an effect upon our experience of the musical work.

One can almost hear Tovey cheering from the grave; and he would scarcely have been less pleased with the chapters that follow, in which Rosen gets down to answering some of those questions Tovey himself left unanswered.

In one illuminating analysis after another Rosen shows how the strengthened tonic-dominant polarity, and the clear hierarchy of tonal relations that it produced, created the need for a more powerful system of phrasing than that offered by the seamless, fluid continuity of Baroque rhythm. It is in the harpsichord sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti, written during the second quarter of the century, that Rosen finds the first clear signs of the "dramatic articulation" under the weight of which he says "the High Baroque aesthetic collapsed." But since nothing arose at once to take the place of that aesthetic, the years 1750-1775 were a "mannerist" period "penetrated by eccen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tricity, hit-or-miss experimentation, resulting in works which are still difficult to accept today because of their oddities." I think he is very acute in singling out, as one important cause of our difficulty with this music, the "rhythmic insecurity" which he rightly says marred even Haydn's finest works during the 1760's. This he attributes to "the lack of co-ordination between phrase rhythm, accent, and harmonic rhythm," and he then goes on to show how that coordination was at last achieved by the development of the short, articulated, periodic phrase, which brought with it "a heightened, indeed overwhelming, sensitivity to symmetry" and "a rhythmic texture of great variety, with the different rhythms not contrasted or superimposed" as in Baroque music, "but passing logically and easily into each other." These qualities he demonstrates by an analysis of the opening of Mozart's K. 271 piano concerto of 1777, "perhaps the first unequivocal masterpiece in a classical style purified of all mannerist traces." In other analyses he shows how the development of the periodic phrase was also accompanied by, or helped to produce, a new capacity to go gradually from one dynamic level to another, an increasingly sharp characterization of the individual beat within the bar, more sharply rounded-off melodies than the almost infinitely "extensible" ones of Baroque music, and the virtual disappearance of Baroque ornament. Finally, we see how all these changes worked together to create the characteristic classical form, with large opening and closing areas of tonal stability and a climax somewhere nearer the center than in the usually cumulative Baroque forms.

Throughout all this demonstration Rosen admirably lives up to his own dictum about "the priorities of hearing." And it is not only the listener's priorities of hearing that he respects but the composers' as well; this is why his specification, at the end of his first chapter, of tonality as "the musical language which made the classical style possible" is not at all like the theorists' various arbitrary choices of one or another musical element as primary in sonata form. At the beginning of the chapter on the theories he insisted that "the 'sonata' is not a definite form like a minuet, a da capo aria, or a French overture: it is, like the fugue, a way of writing, a feeling for proportion, direction, and texture rather than a pattern." The changes in tonality that took place in the mid-century may indeed be said to be primary in the sense that they produced the other changes necessary to the development of the classical style; but what was at work was not an "esoteric process" or conspiratorial plot but rather the gradual spreading of the composers' "feeling for proportion, direction, and texture" from tonal sensitivity to other, related areas, a quite uneseoteric process (though one that could only take place in the mind of a musical genius) which Rosen reconstructs with perfect plausibility.

The remainder of the book is devoted to clarifying the parts that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the three great practitioners of the classical style played in its development. Rosen turns first to the quartets and symphonies Haydn wrote before the death of Mozart in 1791, in which "the synthesis that Haydn gradually developed, in the late 1760s and the early 70s, out of dramatic irregularity and large-scale symmetry" enabled him at last to achieve the "sense that the movement, the development, and the dramatic course of a work all can be found latent in the material, that the material can be made to release its charged force so that the music no longer unfolds, as in the Baroque, but is literally impelled from within." Because the quartets show the steady growth of Haydn's powers more clearly than the symphonies, they serve Rosen's purposes better. Two especially fine and relevant analyses are those of Opus 33 No. 1, in which Rosen shows how an initial momentary tonal ambiguity is made to have far-reaching formal consequences, and Opus 50 No. 1, in which the entire exposition of the first movement "is built from almost nothing at all: a repeated note in the cello and a six-note figure in the violin. . . . There are no tunes, few rhythmic surprises, fewer dramatic harmonies. Yet it is fascinating and witty music, in which Haydn, intent on dazzling us with his technique, makes splendid bricks with hardly any straw at all." The chapter concludes with a perceptive (and welcome) mention of the "air of conversation" that pervades these wonderful, and still too little heard, works.

Rosen is less consistently successful with the symphonies, and I suspect the reason is that until the late 1770's they are really much less good than the quartets, but that his affection for the early ones won't quite let him admit this. "Taken on their own terms the works of the late 60s and early 70s inspire admiration," he tells us; "they are defective only when measured by the standards of Haydn's later works." But this is special pleading, for the early symphonies have plenty of internal defects of their own, and a moment later Rosen disarmingly backs down, admitting that the elaborate analogies by which he has just eloquently defended them "are, however, less pertinent than we who love so many of the early works of Haydn would like them to be." Many of these internal defects can be traced to that "rhythmic insecurity" that Rosen mentioned earlier, and a few pages later we find him demonstrating it by citing the opening bars of Symphony No. 43, composed in 1772. On the later symphonies, once these problems are out of the way, he is superb:

> There is not a measure, even the most serious, of these great works which is not marked by Haydn's wit; and his wit has now grown so powerful and so efficient that it has become a sort of passion, a force at once omnivorous and creative. True civilized wit, the sudden fusion of heterogeneous ideas with an air paradoxically both ingenuous and amiably shrewd, characterizes everything that Haydn wrote after 1780.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

No one has ever written better about Haydn, and the conclusion of the chapter is equally fine. Quoting E. T. A. Hoffmann's remark that listening to Haydn is like taking a walk in the country, Rosen goes on to speak of the late symphonies as examples of what he calls "heroic pastoral":

> The pretension of Haydn's symphonies to a simplicity that appears to come from Nature itself is no mask but the true claim of a style whose command over the whole range of technique is so great that it can ingenuously afford to disdain the outward appearance of high art. Pastoral is generally ironic, with the irony of one who aspires to less than he deserves, hoping he will be granted more. But Haydn's pastoral style is more generous, with all its irony: it is the true heroic pastoral that cheerfully lays claim to the sublime, without yielding any of the innocence and simplicity won by art.

Tovey was fond of drawing connections between Gluck's famous "reform" of opera and the classical revolution. "It is inadequate to call Gluck a 'reformer' of opera," he once wrote. "Music itself was not dramatic before Gluck made it so. Hence it is a mistake to separate Gluck's 'reform' from the whole process of the development of the sonata style." My very sketchy knowledge of Gluck has always led me to feel that his way of being "dramatic" is so totally different from Haydn's and Mozart's way that Tovey's emphasis here may be misplaced; therefore I was very interested to find Rosen, in an unexpected chapter on *opera seria,* emphasizing the very self-conscious neoclassical (rather than classical) severity and simplicity of Gluck's work: "This restressed relationship between music and feeling tied operatic music emphatically to the words almost at the very moment that Mozart was about to achieve its emancipation by making the music not so much an expression of the text (although still partially that) but an equivalent for the dramatic action." Once Rosen has isolated the unclassical and even Baroque elements of Gluck's style and pointed out that his "true inheritor" is Berlioz rather than the classical composers, there is no longer much doubt about who it was that changed opera in the ways most relevant to the classical style: "Mozart's achievement was revolutionary: for the first time on the operatic stage, the music could follow the dramatic movement while still arriving at a form that could justify itself, at least in its essentials, on purely internal grounds." Mozart thus "destroyed neoclassicism in opera," and Rosen quotes a very interesting passage from Goethe which shows that he saw this clearly at the time: "All our endeavor . . . to confine ourselves to what is simple and limited was lost when Mozart appeared."

Opera is of course a very effective way of approaching Mozart, for as Tovey was also fond of pointing out, "Mozart's whole musical

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

language is, and remains throughout, the language of comic opera." A good deal of Rosen's book may in fact be thought of as an expansion of that remark, for one of his continuing themes is the importance for non-dramatic music of the developments that took place in opera late in the century. Therefore it's no surprise that in three chapters devoted respectively to Mozart's piano concertos, string quintets, and comic operas, Rosen's central interest is in the analogies between sonata form and the forms employed in the operas, in "the capacity of the sonata style to fuse with a dramatic conception as no other previous style had done" and so to produce a "coincidence between abstract and dramatic pattern." But these analogies work much more revealingly for the concertos than for the quintets since, as Rosen points out, "the dramatic forms of the opera and the concerto" both "pit the individual voice against the sonority of the mass." Therefore the chapter on the quintets, though quite fine in itself, seems to stand outside the book's argument. One can't help feeling that Rosen would have done better to discuss them in relation to the quartets, for he would then have been able to explore more fully his very interesting observation that whenever Mozart turned to writing quintets, it was "always directly after having written a series of quartets, as if the experience of composing for only four instruments prompted him to take up the richer medium."

The chapters on the concertos and the comic operas, on the other hand, cooperate with each other marvelously. In the former, Rosen shows how closely the abstract formal problems of the concertos were entangled with Mozart's desire to treat the piano as a dramatic character; in the latter, he analyzes several ensembles and arias to give body to his earlier remark about Mozart's operatic achievement and to support his contention that "no description of sonata form can be given that will fit the Haydn quartets but not the majority of forms in a Mozart opera." To me the most interesting thing in the chapter on the concertos was Rosen's remark that the now seldom heard K. 537 (the "Coronation Concerto") owed its popularity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the fact that "it is historically the most 'progressive' of all Mozart's works, the closest to the early or proto-Romantic style of Hummel and Weber," a "revolutionary work" which "shifts the balance between the harmonic and melodic aspects so that the structure now depends largely on melodic succession" and "the melodic aspect of the themes is emphasized over their harmonic function." "It was not Beethoven but Mozart," he concludes, "who showed how the classical style might be destroyed." In the chapter on the operas there was one point at which I felt Rosen was pushing the similarities between sonata form and the operatic forms too far: his attempt to apply to whole operas what he had said earlier about the recognizable tonal unity of smaller, non-dramatic classical works. For while it is certainly interesting that all the operas

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mozart wrote after the age of twenty end in the key of the overture, this seems a psychological fact about him rather than a fact about something in the music which we can "claim . . . has always been heard, without being put into words perhaps, but with an effect upon our experience of the musical work." If the last movement of a Haydn quartet were played a half-tone up or down, we would instantly realize that something was wrong; but what about the last act of *Figaro*? Coming after an intermission, would the slight change of key—the greatest possible change, of course, from a harmonic standpoint—really be recognizable to the ear unblessed with perfect pitch? Rosen in fact seems to admit that it wouldn't by saying that the listener's recognition of the central tonality depends on the "individual sonority that it seems to evoke," for this of course depends in turn on the psychology of the composer, on the special associations that various keys happen to have for him. Once the sonority had been achieved on paper, I can't see why it wouldn't be almost perfectly preserved if the music were only slightly transposed.

Returning to Haydn, Rosen concentrates his attention on the late piano trios and church music, and on the various means by which Haydn achieved the "popular style" that made him the composer who, more completely than any other in history, "won at the same time the unquestioned and generous respect of the musical community and the ungrudging acclaim of the public." There are fine discussions of the ways in which Haydn assimilated folk-tunes into his formal designs and of the special difficulties that church music presented to a style so dependent on wit and irony, but the best of the three chapters is the one on the piano trios, in which Rosen argues that the piano trio, "with the cello reinforcing the bass and the melodies that most needed singing power given to the violin," helped Haydn to overcome the mechanical weaknesses of the contemporary piano just as the concerto helped Mozart. One can only hope that Rosen's sensitive writing about the wonders to be found in these undeservedly neglected works will stimulate a little recording activity, for while all of the other music discussed in this book is now available on records in a happy profusion undreamt of in the old 78-rpm days, with Haydn's piano trios we are actually worse off now than we were then. Four of the authentic twenty-six used to be available, and all of them in splendid performances: one by Cortot, Thibaud, and Casals, and the other three by Kraus, Goldberg, and Pini. They were all on LP once, but have now vanished, and a recent Schwann catalogue reveals that only two of these late masterpieces can now be had at all (though no fewer than seven of the very agreeable and historically important early baryton trios are available—no doubt because their inclusion of an obsolete instrument feeds the lust for the Baroque that keeps so many record companies in business).

So at last we arrive at Beethoven, and the long-postponed treat-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment of him is not at all anti-climactic, even though Rosen must of course be heroically selective. "Beethoven transformed the musical tradition he was born into, but he never challenged its validity," Rosen begins, in a way that will be familiar to anyone who has read Tovey. But he goes on to place Beethoven's assimilation of classical forms rather later than one would expect, during the years 1804-06, the years of the *Eroica,* the *Waldstein,* the *Appassionata,* the Rasumovsky quartets, the G major piano concerto, and the first version of *Fidelio.* Of what preceded he writes:

> In his youthful works, the imitation of his two great precursors is largely exterior: in technique and even in spirit, he is at the beginning of his career often closer to Hummel, Weber, and to the later works of Clementi than to Haydn and Mozart. . . . The equilibrium between harmonic and thematic development so characteristic of Haydn and Mozart is often lost in early Beethoven, where thematic contrast and transformation seem to outweigh all other interests. Beethoven, indeed, started as a true member of his generation, writing now in a proto-Romantic style and now in a late and somewhat attenuated version of the classical style, with an insistence on the kind of broad, square melodic structure that was to find its true justification later in the Romantic period of the 1830s.

The "development towards openly cyclic form" in the works of the lean years 1812-18, particularly in *An die ferne Geliebte* (1816), leads Rosen to the interesting hypothesis that perhaps at this time "the classical sense of form appeared bankrupt" to Beethoven, "spurring him to search for a new system of expression." His decision to return to the classical forms is embodied in the enormous achievement of the *Hammerklavier* Sonata, which Rosen analyzes at great length and quite rightly pronounces the most "obsessively concentrated" of all Beethoven's works. In the last works Rosen, like so many other listeners, is fascinated by the extraordinary simplification that all musical elements seem to undergo in Beethoven's hands and by the simultaneous heightening of drama and inwardness: "With all their tension, these effects are essentially meditative in character, and they make one aware to what an extent the exploration of the tonal universe was an act of introspection."

The only part of this that I found unconvincing was the treatment of the earliest works. I confess to almost no knowledge of what Rosen calls "proto-Romantic" music, and so hesitate to take issue with him. Still, it does seem to me that in the piano sonatas from Opus 7 on, the best of the Opus 18 quartets, and the second symphony—to name only the most obvious works—one finds Beethoven doing precisely what Rosen says he didn't do until a few years later: employing "the closed, concise, and dramatic forms of Haydn and Mozart, expanding

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these forms and heightening their power without betraying their proportions." Moreover, I think my feeling that something is wrong here is confirmed by the fact that just at this point there is an odd shift of direction in the argument. When Rosen points out that "almost from the beginning of his career as a composer, Beethoven attempted to find substitutes for the dominant in the classical tonic-dominant polar relation," it sounds as though he is about to demonstrate the "proto-Romantic" qualities of the early works; but then suddenly you realize that the argument is going all the other way, towards proving that "it is tempting to think of Beethoven's substitute dominants as having something in common with the harmonic structures of the Romantic period, but his harmonic freedom is of a different order and nature."

Rosen's view of Beethoven's development is interesting not only in itself but also because of its organic relation to what increasingly emerges as perhaps the most important theme of the book: the absolute gap that separates the classical composers not only from the generation who preceded them but also from the generation who followed. Of Beethoven's relation to the nineteenth century Rosen eloquently writes:

> Not only musical fashion but musical history had turned away from Beethoven. In the music of his younger contemporaries (with the exception of Schubert) and of the generation that followed his death, his work, while admired and loved, is hardly a vital force; not until Brahms and the later operas of Wagner will it play a significant role. The prestige of his music blinds us to this fact, in the same way, indeed, that it blinded the musicians of the first half of the nineteenth century. . . . All that is most interesting in the next generation is a reaction against Beethoven, or an attempt to ignore him, a turning away into new directions: all that is weakest submits to his power and pays him the emptiest and most sincere of homages.

So one corollary of Tovey's first truth, that Beethoven did not break radically with his immediate musical past, turns out to be that the early Romantics, appearances and intentions more or less to the contrary, did break radically with theirs. And another corollary is that there are more and deeper similarities between Baroque and Romantic music than one might have suspected, that the Romantics' radical break with the classical style was also something of a return. "The Romantic style did not come from Beethoven," Rosen concludes, "in spite of the great admiration that was felt for him, but from his lesser contemporaries and from Bach." And conversely: "The true inheritors of the classical style were not those who maintained its traditions, but those, from Chopin to Debussy, who preserved its freedom as they gradually altered and finally destroyed the musical language which had made the creation of the style possible."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The work of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven forms the adamantine core of the Western musical consciousness. As Rosen says in his preface: "The music of the classical period, like the painting of the High Renaissance, still provides today a standard by which the rest of our musical experience is judged." Yet the circumstances under which this massive achievement came into being have always seemed romantic and even mysterious: the three great men converging on Vienna, the musical public's sure and virtually immediate sense of their superiority to other composers, the immensely fruitful ways in which they influenced one another—it all sounds like a script-writer's dream. And so in a sense it was. No one has been more guilty than musicologists of the sin of smoothing everything out, making every startling development look drably inevitable, and proving in effect that there really is nothing new under the sun after all. By calling our attention instead to the sharp discontinuities that separate the music of the classical period from that which immediately preceded and followed it, Rosen makes clear that it really was a sort of miraculous aberration. His book achieves far more than I have been able to suggest, but its greatest achievement is to have made its subject both more solidly comprehensible and more thoroughly mysterious than ever: like all really first-rate investigations into the workings of genius, *The Classical Style* heightens our sense of wonder and gratitude in direct proportion to the enlightenment it affords. Is it really "better than Tovey" as my friend asked? As I've tried to show, the whole historical process emerges with more clarity and richness than it ever does in Tovey, but then Tovey did come first and lay the groundwork. Perhaps it would be more to the point just to say that Rosen's book presents us with an extraordinarily happy example of the creative influence that one powerful mind can have on another —rather the same sort of thing we find when we study the classical style.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STEPHEN FARBER

Outlaws and Snobs

IN FILM SCHOOLS ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY a generation of cultists is rediscovering American genre movies, organizing retrospectives and writing research papers on B Westerns directed by Sam Fuller, Budd Boetticher and Don Siegel, inventing the most complex rationales for these movies' stupidity. At the same time many "highbrow" critics continue to mock the very idea of taking genre movies seriously. Movie criticism these days is a series of battles waged by fanatics. As usual the truth lies somewhere between the extreme positions. It is possible to reject the basic assumptions of the cultists and still recognize that the traditional genres have a rather amazing resiliency, a remarkable capacity to be refreshed by talented writers and directors.

No genre has been more overworked than the Western, yet in just the last few years directors like Sam Peckinpah (*The Wild Bunch*), Arthur Penn (*Little Big Man*), and Robert Altman (*McCabe and Mrs. Miller*) have found that the Western form offered a canvas for original speculative films about American history. Younger directors too are drawn to the Western. Robert Benton's *Bad Company* fashions historical fragments about Civil War draft evaders into a harsh lyric study of the pioneer experience and the genesis of a Western outlaw. And in *The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid* Philip Kaufman has shattered cliches to create a marvelous crazy quilt of a movie about the last bank robbery of Cole Younger and Jesse James.

By now almost everything has been tried in the Western genre. Traditional Westerns are fables of righteous violence and true grit, nostalgic laments for the simpler moral code of the frontier; *The Cowboys,* with John Wayne as a cattle rancher who trains a group of boys in the art of slaughter, is the latest example. In more cynical recent films that might be called anti-Westerns, familiar myths are turned inside out and found to contain prophetic warnings of American racism and imperialism; in *Soldier Blue,* for example, the Sand Creek massacre becomes a metaphor for My Lai. Both groups of films distort the past for the sake of a homely moral lesson. Philip Kaufman has taken neither of these complacent approaches in *The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid.* Although the film undercuts traditional heroics—portraying Jesse James as a psychopath, and the "great Northfield, Minnesota raid" as a disaster—it has no radical chic theories that it uses to squeeze the past into shape. What makes the film exhilarating is its capacity to be *surprised* about the West.

One thing that distinguishes Kaufman from other young writer-directors is his interest in narrative. He relishes the ironies of an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intricate plot, and the large gallery of eccentric minor characters who give the film the density of a Dickens novel—an old widow, about to be evicted, but determined not to sell her precious collection of dolls (which she calls "the children"), a jovial, corrupt banker trying to entice depositors with a new time lock vault and a calliope, a raccoon-coated entrepreneur who wants to clean the town of "scum," a stoned pre-hippie bandit who wears one earring to "ward off fear" and carries home remedies to give him added "zeal" during sexual intercourse.

The film is conceived as a kind of ballad, rich in incident and invention, and complete with a bombastic old-movie narrator to supply historical footnotes on the James and Younger boys, the Missouri farmers who became outlaws to fight the wicked Railroad. At the beginning the narration, which has the purple prose rhythm of a dime novel, mocks the heroic vision of Western outlaws: "They were the greatest outlaws . . . They rode like the wind. . . ." That high-flown rhetoric is almost immediately undercut in a long scene of Jesse and Frank James discussing strategy inside a fly-infested outhouse. But Kaufman has no interest in a facile debunking of sacred cows. As the film goes on, it almost seems swept up by the raw material of the legend, until it is spinning its own tale of marvels. *The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid* has the magic and mystery of an oral tale embellished over the campfire, an American Arabian Nights.

Ignoring the typical Western movie feats of courage and cunning, the film weaves its fabric of "wonderments" (in Cole Younger's word) from the exotic details of everyday life in the West of 1876—a gypsy woman dispensing curses and cures in her cave, a sheriff speaking Swedish to a wagon full of convicts, a giant new steam engine roaring into the progressive town of Northfield, an undertaker posing for photographers with his quarry, two bullet-riddled corpses on display in their coffins. Aided by Bruce Surtees' mellow cinematography, Kaufman brings the period alive, and makes us share the astonishment the outlaws feel on entering an unfamiliar part of the West. But his approach goes beyond realism. Moments are almost dreamlike: For example, during the climactic ambush the posse silently approaches the house where the gang is sleeping, the only sound a Swedish lullaby teasing Cole Younger into the twilight world between sleep and waking. When the shots ring out, they seem to be fired by the dolls that stand in the windows. We can't be sure quite what we've seen, for the next morning, most of the outlaws are still alive, carted through town in a festive parade. They seem almost superhuman; and their story turns into legend while we watch, astounded.

Another particularly hypnotic scene is the amateur baseball game that Cole Younger attends in Northfield, which becomes an enchanted moment of reverie, an evocation of lost innocence; because of the slight stylization in the treatment of the scene, we feel we might be watching the very first American baseball game, the *creation* of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

national pastime in a cow pasture. (The National League was actually formed in 1876, the year of the Northfield raid.) The comedy is in the unprofessional quality of the game—two intense players colliding, the ball landing in a pile of cow dung, a cigar store Indian standing in the outfield; but the breathtaking mountain scenery and the genuine sense of spontaneity touch this absurd, not yet commercialized spectacle with flashes of lyricism. Kaufman allows us to look at a scene with a mixture of skepticism and affection.

The film uses the motif of sport and gamesmanship as a controlling metaphor in its study of Americana. During the baseball match a more sophisticated game is being played along the sidelines—a confidence game engineered by the bank president to coax the citizens' savings into his vault. And there are other parallels to the baseball game—some innocent, some sinister—throughout the film: The bank robbery is staged like a Wild West show, with the calliope squealing at the spectators; the citizens of Northfield keep a scorecard of casualties during a pointless shootout with a neighboring village; and near the end, parading down main street, the town Babbitt proudly displays the ear he has cut off one of the dead bandits, a trophy won in battle. This vision of American life as a non-stop circus contest reaches a moving conclusion in the final scene, when Cole is carried through town in a cage, vying for the townspeople's attention with the victorious posse, finally winning the crowd's cheers as he rises to his feet to show off his bulletproof vest, exiting in "triumph"—to 35 years in the federal penitentiary—by performing the most magnificent stunt of all.

This scene may suggest that *Northfield,* like *Bonnie and Clyde* or *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,* is one more fashionably romantic saga of the outlaw as unformed revolutionary. The only problem with such an interpretation is that in the film itself the demented Jesse James articulates that romantic view of the outlaw; he sees himself as a Robin Hood championing the poor and the oppressed. ("I cannot think of one honest man we ever robbed," he comments to his brother Frank.) Jesse likes to imagine himself as an alienated rebel hero, but unlike Bonnie and Clyde, he is a truly vicious killer—Robin Hood gone berserk. Robert Duvall's performance is unquestionably among the most daring characterizations ever conceived for a Western; this Jesse James is a deranged saboteur who still thinks he is on a guerrilla raid for the Confederacy, a showman hungry for an audience, a mystic and religious fanatic, weeping crocodile tears over a homeless old woman he later murders quite remorselessly. In a typical moment Jesse corners the mercenary Landlord who has been driving widows and children from their homes, proudly identifies himself, then without any provocation murders the helpless man, explaining to the other gang members: "Nobody should be able to identify a guerrilla in enemy country." The mixture of mad comedy and terrifying brutality is what makes the moment

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

acerbic; we are uncertain whether to laugh or to gasp. Whereas Frank Perry's smugly cynical *Doc* turned Wyatt Earp into a small, comprehensible neurotic, Duvall's Jesse James has a sly, perverse charm that makes him slippery and disturbing; he may not be the heroic bandit played by Tyrone Power, but at least he seems bizarre and compelling enough to inspire legends. Nothing about him is ordinary.

To a lesser extent the other characters have the same complexity. Charley Pitts, freaked on astrology and the occult, might be the outlaw as flower child; but his gentleness is only a veneer—he unthinkingly joins the other townspeople in throwing stones at the harmless village idiot. Jim Younger, mute because his lip was shot off in a raid ("He spoke with his guns," the narrator says), is at some moments a figure from silent comedy, wearing a piece of a mule's tail for a mustache, or sneaking pieces of sausage under his scarf to avoid showing his lip at the dinner table. Yet in one scene—a graceful, melancholy waltz that he dances with a girl in the whorehouse—he suddenly embodies the mystery and glamour of a doomed romantic hero. Even Cole Younger, who is closest to a conventional Western movie hero, has offbeat characteristics: he is an amateur Mr. Fixit whose interest in modern technology is directly responsible for the catastrophic failure of the Northfield raid.

In contrast to the other recent films about the West in transition, *Northfield* does not offer the comfort of a grand tragic conclusion. Its gently melancholy ending is characteristic of the unpredictability and understatement of the entire film. Subtlety is the last quality one expects to find in a Western, but nothing in *Northfield* is labored or underlined with "significance"; the film treats us with unusual respect. Some of the loveliest moments are practically subliminal—the black and white photographs of dispossessed farmers at the very beginning, a shot of a few buffalo crossing the outlaws' path, then disappearing, the four girls in white who haunt Cole's fantasies and who finally materlialize in the last scene, riding to a carnival that he cannot join—a vision of serenity and sensuality just out of reach.

It is always amazing when a beautiful, idiosyncratic film like this slips through the studio system. However, now that it has happened, Universal seems almost spitefully determined to bury the film; so far it has opened mainly in drive-ins. Although few people have had a chance to see the film, I think it will turn out to be a minor classic by a gifted and important new filmmaker. Like Truffaut's *Shoot the Piano Player,* a movie to which it is remarkably close in spirit, *Northfield* constantly defies genre expectations, moving from satire to romance to farce to violent realism, and daring us to keep up.

But that comparison is slightly misleading. *The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid* is a uniquely American film, a natural descendant of Mark Twain and Bret Harte and the Paul Bunyan stories. The film reflects the current impatience with official myths, and satisfies the growing interest in the real, unglamorous American past—not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because everything in it is literally true, but because it represents a fresh imaginative response to its subject. Philip Kaufman has created a dream of the past that we *want* to believe; if the West wasn't like this, it should have been. *The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid* involves us in discovering our origins; it transforms American history and legend into an exuberant, surprisingly tender mock epic poetry.

It is not surprising for a studio to treat art with contempt, but it is more disturbing when the critics neglect innovative films. Vernon Young wrote a long essay in this journal on the fine Swedish film, *The Emigrants,* complaining along the way that Hollywood has never made a good movie about American history. Will Young even bother to see *The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid?* Many critics still have a condescending, snobbish attitude toward American movies. They are completely unadventurous in their tastes. Predictably, they lose their heads over a dreary Swiss film, Alain Tanner's *La Salamandre,* which satisfies all their preconceptions of what cinema "art" should be.

La Salamandre is not unpleasant to watch, and one might even dismiss it as likable and intermittently amusing were it not for the reviews, which herald Tanner as a major new talent. *La Salamandre* is barely a movie at all. It recalls the drab, talky films of Eric Rohmer—and the responses have been equally rapturous. Rohmer and Tanner may be interesting dramatists or philosophers (though I would question even that) but they do not yet deserve to be called accomplished movie directors. Critics respond to the ideas in these movies, and take their cerebral intentions for their achievements. The adulation for these two unimaginative, vastly overrated directors is the clearest proof of the outrageous literary bias and visual illiteracy of most film critics.

Conceptually *La Salamandre* is intriguing. Two writers, Pierre (a seasoned journalist) and Paul (a poet who survives as a house painter) decide to collaborate on a television documentary about Rosemonde, a factory worker who was charged with shooting her uncle. The film sets out to explore the disparity between the writers' conception of Rosemonde and Rosemonde as she actually is—or in larger terms, the interplay of imagination and reality. There is a witty, arresting scene at the beginning when Paul imagines a whole history for Rosemonde on the basis of the scanty evidence available. He chooses to create her as a fictional character, while the more prosaic Pierre wants to base his portrait on interviews and journalistic investigation of Rosemonde. Eventually both writers meet her and become infatuated with her; they never finish their film.

Apparently Tanner's point is that Rosemonde is so much more complex and mysterious than the writers imagine that she confounds their fiction. That may be the director's intention, but the film never comes close to realizing it. Tanner never dramatizes any substantial difference between the literary conception of Rosemonde and the "real" Rosemonde. As it happens, Paul's initial characterization of her turns out to be fairly accurate, so the film is without surprises

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or revelations. Bulle Ogier, who plays the pivotal role, is a charming and commanding actress, but she simply isn't given enough to work with. Rosemonde is little more than a stock figure—a carbon copy of the "free spirit" of the 1962 New Wave movie, indolent, sensual, impulsive, amoral.

La Salamandre owes a great deal to *Jules and Jim* in particular. The plot is similar, and the offscreen narration deliberately apes the narration of Truffaut's film. For a while these echoes make the new movie pleasantly nostalgic. But the reminders of *Jules and Jim* only show up the emptiness of *La Salamandre*. Jeanne Moreau's Catherine may have been conceived as the same kind of "free spirit," but Truffaut defined her with some striking, ambiguous gestures—her dressing as a Chaplinesque tramp, her jump into the Seine, her satisfied singing of her own *chanson*—that made her a magnificent, intimidating figure, both artist and destroyer. The best that Tanner can do is a little scene where Rosemonde shakes her head uncontrollably while listening to some rock music. The scene makes its point; it demonstrates her wildness. But the images are much too restrained. Compared to Catherine, Rosemonde's defiance is incredibly mild and "civilized." Perhaps placed against the extreme placidity of Swiss society, Rosemonde's irreverence can seem startling. But on any absolute scale she would be a very small figure—little more than a social victim, a pawn to be used in the director's narrow diatribe against capitalist exploitation.

The whole film is almost laughably austere. Critics prattle about the "sensuality" of *My Night at Maud's* or *La Salamandre*. What can they possibly mean? Their rarefied idea of "sensuality" is what gives criticism a bad name. *La Salamandre* is so fastidious that we don't even know when—or if—Pierre and Paul sleep with Rosemonde. In the scene where she teases Pierre by taking off her skirt, a few sparks are ignited, but the scene is all buildup and no climax. Besides, it's so clumsily edited that we never see Pierre's reaction; we can't even be sure he's looking at her. The eroticism in *La Salamandre* is all in conception; there are no *images* that convey Rosemonde's sexual vitality.

And that's the basic problem with the film. Everything is asserted, nothing shown. Why don't Pierre and Paul finish their film? The Rosemonde we've seen hardly seems remarkable enough to throw their lives off balance. At the end Pierre leaves Geneva for Paris, while Paul simply returns to his house painting. Presumably their contact with Rosemonde has broadened their horizons and shattered their complacency. In one scene they do stage a mildly subversive prank on a streetcar, which may be meant to show Rosemonde's liberating influence. But Tanner never concretely demonstrates the results of their interaction. The whole encounter seems superfluous. Tanner is a careless writer. At the start he characterizes Pierre and Paul in sharp, economical strokes; but their relationship never develops in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

any way. If there are tensions over their three-sided relationship with Rosemonde, those must be expressed between scenes. The film has none of the psychological nuance of *Jules and Jim*. But even that might be forgivable if Tanner were a better filmmaker. The theme of insulated intellectuals confronting a force of nature, and art colliding with reality, is incredibly challenging. To draw a subtle, dramatic contrast between the real Rosemonde and the artist's idea of her requires strong visual invention; the theme demands Fellini's fluency in the language of movie fantasy.

There are nice things in *La Salamandre*, to be sure—some pretty snowscapes, vivid minor characters, a few witty, pungent scenes (like one in which Rosemonde caresses the legs of the customers in the shoe store where she works). But the movie is all promises. The drama of *La Salamandre* takes place entirely in the critics' heads. None of it is on the screen. Otto Preminger once said that Dwight Macdonald would have admired *Bonjour Tristesse* if it had been dubbed into French. He may have had a point. Dub *La Salamandre* in English, and maybe the critics would cool down a little. But they love reading all those arch, "literate" speeches in subtitles. They don't watch the movie; they allow themselves to be transported by the written words. And in the meantime, a true work of film art like *The Great Northfield, Minnesota Raid* languishes without an audience.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(Act of August 12, 1970: Section 3685. Title 39. United States Code)

1. TITLE OF PUBLICATION: THE HUDSON REVIEW. 2. DATE OF FILING: October 1, 1972.
3. FREQUENCY OF ISSUE: Quarterly.
4. LOCATION OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, Virginia 23261.
5. LOCATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHERS: The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
6. NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR.
PUBLISHER: The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
EDITOR: Frederick Morgan, 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
MANAGING EDITOR: Irene Skolnick, 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
7. OWNER: The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022, a New York membership corporation not authorized to issue stock, whose members are: Paula Deitz, Edmund T. Delaney, Frederick Morgan, and Irene Skolnick, all same address.
8. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES, AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING OR HOLDING 1 PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS, MORTGAGES OR OTHER SECURITIES: None.

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. of Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No. Copies *(Net Press Run)*	3253	3400
B. Paid Circulation		
1. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales	400	400
2. Mail Subscriptions	2683	2820
C. Total Paid Circulation	3083	3220
D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier or Other Means		
1. Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free Copies	70	80
2. Copies Distributed to News Agents, But Not Sold	0	0
E. Total Distribution *(Sum of C and D)*	3153	3300
F. Office Use, Left-Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled After Printing	100	100
G. Total *(Sum of E & F—should equal net press run shown in A)*	3253	3400

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(Signed) Irene Skolnick
Business Manager

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHARLES W. MILLARD

Brancusi and the Neo-Classical Tradition

TRAINED FIRST AT ACADEMIES in Rumania, Brancusi evidenced in his earliest work a distinct and accomplished, albeit wholly conventional, talent. The conventionality of that talent, dependent less on his temperament than on the time and place in which he found himself, meant that Brancusi proceeded through the copying of classical works and studies of relief to produce clay and plaster essays in portraiture, presumably intended to be preliminary to work in bronze and marble. Arriving in Paris in 1904 at the age of twenty-eight, he continued his academic studies with the sculptor Mercié, but the same adventurous spirit which had drawn him to the French capital also led him to explore new avenues in his work. By 1906 these included abbreviating the standard bust portrait format into a head alone, extending it to three-quarter length, and experimenting with facture in such a way that the plasters apparently meant to be studies for marble juxtaposed highly finished passages with roughly carved or uncut areas, while the bronzes were executed with roughened and inflected surfaces that clearly owe a great deal to Rodin, with whom Brancusi had a brief apprenticeship. 1907 marks the end of this student period and the beginning of the consolidation of Brancusi's own artistic sensibility. In that year he produced the Stanescu monument, consisting of the elongated kneeling figure *Prayer,* with its radically simplified forms and a roughened but regularly accented surface that could well be described as *tachiste,* and the monumentalized bust portrait of Petre Stanescu, executed in a similar technique and likewise simplified in its forms. In the same year, he experimented with a number of pieces in stone, the crude forms of which clearly owe something to his knowledge of the African sculpture then being introduced to Paris. These stone works, which occupied him on and off until 1910, and in the case of *The Kiss* much longer, also refer back to the folk carving Brancusi had known in the Rumania of his youth. It is not without significance that African art should have freed him "for the forms of the folk arts of his native country"[1] at just the moment his style was coalescing in quite a different, more international and more modern, direction.

By 1908-09 many of the forms and stylistic mannerisms with which Brancusi was to be identified were present in his work. The former include children's heads reclining rather than held upright and fragmentary torsos, the latter, clearly-outlined ovoid eyes and simplified

1 Sidney Geist, "Brancusi Sanctificatus," *Arts,* January 1960, p. 29.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nose shapes arching into exaggerated brows. By 1910 he was producing works in marble and bronze that are wholly recognizable in terms of the later refined variations he was to play upon them. For four or five years certain hesitancies were still noticeable in these works, including over-characterization of individually expressive features such as eyes, mouth, and ears, and under-characterization of others, more important sculpturally, such as arching brows. There was also a tendency to differentiate texture by, for example, roughening the area of the hair to set it off against the highly polished marble or the bronze of the face, but by the First World War Brancusi had eliminated these mitigating elements in his work and was wholly embarked on the course with which he has been most associated since that time.

What is not generally enough acknowledged in relation to Brancusi's bronze and marble sculpture is that it is the direct product of his academic training, the quintessential reduction of the neo-classical ideas common in sculpture and sculptural theory since Canova and Quatremère de Quincy. There is, first, the matter of materials. Marble was the neo-classical material *par excellence,* partly because of its relative rarity and supposed nobility, and partly because of the finesse with which it was able to suggest human flesh and to receive the finest details. Highly-polished marble was Brancusi's preferred medium, although he seldom used it to evoke flesh directly even when the human face or figure was involved. Rather, he employed its texture, grain, or color as a sort of analogue to flesh, reinforcing the sensuous shape of such a work as *Torso of a Girl* (two versions of which were produced in onyx) and enhancing one's experience of touching it. Nor was Brancusi interested in modern ideas of exploiting the character or peculiarities of his materials in an expressive way, as some have suggested. "The question of making material expressive 'through use of its own language' is one which Brancusi's work never raises," Geist points out. "An artist who transfers his forms from stone to bronze, from wood to bronze and from white marble to black, while altering forms in only the minutest fashion, is not concerned with the language of material but with the language of form."[2] The high finish to which the sculptor brought his marbles and bronzes is thoroughly in keeping with the neo-classical ideal. In earlier and more orthodox neo-classicism such finish was an attempt to approach the supposed perfection of the ancients, better to convey the nobility of their ideal, and it was used to differentiate part from part by a scrupulous variation of textures. In his earlier work Brancusi, too, had used textural variation to characterize different parts of his works, but as his pieces evolved toward single, undifferentiated shapes, his finish also resolved itself into a single effect. The colored or textured marbles that he used "came to the surface" when he polished them. That is, polishing brought out their grain and color in such a way as to accentuate the

[2] Geist, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

surface, even at the expense of inflections in the sculptural form in the case of one version of the *Mlle Pogany,* and to reinforce the solid object character of the work. This is wholly in the spirit of traditional high finish, the subtlety and delicacy of which served to render the object more palpable, as well as to perfect and inflect it. The mirror-like finish of Brancusi's bronzes, on the other hand, functioned to dissolve the object in a play of reflections, evaporating it into space, as it were, in the exploration of ideas that other sculptors were to approach structurally. In the context of the search for a modernist sculpture, this annihilation of the object is not so strange as the fact that Brancusi should go to such lengths to establish that object in its purity in the first place. This apparent contradiction suggests a struggle within the artist which had, as we shall see, other and more important symptoms. No better proof of Brancusi's basic interest in form at the expense of material could be adduced than the diametrically opposed effects produced by his high finishes on different materials, particularly when these opposed effects appear in different versions of the same work.

Another outcropping of neo-classical principle in Brancusi's work has to do with drawing. In this case, preliminary drawing or drawing on paper is not the important issue, although such drawing was essential to the neo-classical visualization of sculpture and Brancusi used it as a tool. The drawing in question is that represented by the sculpture itself, and it has two aspects in neo-classical work and in that of Brancusi. The first is interior drawing used to define and vary texture and to separate textural areas from one another. With the development of Brancusi's work, such drawing was gradually transformed into edge, marking the meeting of different forms, as in the serrations of the *Cock* or the ridges defining the hand and hair of *Mlle Pogany.* More significant is the matter of drawing as outline, important to conventional sculpture because of its insistence on relief-like composition and silhouette. Outline became increasingly crucial to Brancusi and the linear suavity of such pieces as his Birds resolves them into demonstrations of drawing in space of a kind quite different from that later practised by David Smith. It was their profile that mattered, again with the neo-classical intent of detaching the piece clearly from the background against which it was seen and isolating it from the space in which it was set. Concomitant with this was Brancusi's retention of four distinct points of view for each work, the most significant and characteristic being that from the side. This reminiscence of neo-classical relief principles and of sculpture that was carved into a square block from its four sides was apparent even in the most abstract among his sculpture, the *Bird in Space,* and was abandoned by him only in his very late turtles, which, although they retain a characteristic profile, are meant to be seen principally from above rather than from the side.

Rejecting Rodin's solution of leading the eye around sculpture

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by irregular shapes and vigorous surface modelling and Degas' of suppressing outline in favor of movemented spatial configurations, Brancusi remained firmly in the neo-classical tradition in his work in bronze and marble, investing that tradition with a life it had lacked for a century. Perhaps no comparison is so telling of Brancusi's links with tradition as that of his portrait heads, notably those of Nancy Cunard and Mlle Pogany, with the portrait of the Marquise de la Carte created in 1836 by Baron Bosio, the most accomplished of the French neo-classical sculptors. In the latter work, the forms are reduced to almost complete abstraction, the continuous line of brow and nose, the outlining ridges of the eyes, and the domed shape of the head clearly presaging the *Mlle Pogany*. The calligraphic swirl of hair atop what otherwise seems a bald head is used to much the same effect as that on the Brancusi *Nancy Cunard,* and in every way one immediately senses by this juxtaposition Brancusi's artistic ancestry.

Having realized the historical context into which Brancusi's bronze and marble work fits, one is puzzled to discover alongside that work a group of objects so foreign to it in material and conception as frequently to seem the work of an altogether different artist—the sculpture in wood. Beginning about 1913 Brancusi produced these works over a period of approximately fifteen years and they include not only pieces intended as sculpture, but bases, furniture, and various elements of architecture. One's puzzlement increases with the realization that these pieces are uniformly more powerful and personal, and not infrequently of considerably higher artistic quality, than the work in other media. Deriving his forms directly from the wood in which he worked, or from such intimate sources as reminiscences of Rumanian folk architecture or the screw of a winepress, Brancusi explored spatial ideas which never arose in his other sculpture, creating bold, crudely-cut forms clearly of great personal significance and, hence, of great significance for the future. Such is the strength of these works that wooden bases not infrequently overwhelm the marble pieces set upon them and a good case could be made for *King of Kings* as Brancusi's finest work in any medium.

The first clue to the meaning of this work in wood within Brancusi's total *oeuvre* is perhaps to be found in the date he began it. At the very moment he consolidated his bronze and marble style into an ultimate refinement of that taught in the academies—at the moment, that is, that he capitulated to his training—he took up in wood the less orthodox ideas he had earlier tentatively explored in stone. The clear implication is that, rather than finding a successful marriage of these two strains in his work, Brancusi divorced them entirely into an official and a private art, one responsive to ideas of sculptural training and tradition, to conceptions of what fine art ought to be, the other answering to more intense and personal emotions less accessible to the world and tradition. This is not to say that the work in bronze and marble is not emotionally felt nor that in wood free from more con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ventional ideas of art. It is, however, to suggest that Brancusi's strongest and truest work is that which has thus far drawn the least attention. It was almost inevitable that this work be in wood, not merely because of the Rumanian referent, but because wood was the sculptural material least approved by neo-classicism. Writing of it in the early 1860's, Charles Blanc linked it to paganism, and because it is derived from a living organism it has always retained more vestiges of the primitive quality which Baudelaire saw in sculpture than any other material. One senses Brancusi's awareness of these overtones in titles such as *Adam and Eve* and *The Sorceress* and the freedom from convention generated by that awareness no doubt encouraged him to experimentation of a sort he would not otherwise have made. The Caryatids, for example, break away from associations with the unencumbered human form, most clearly represented by the academic nude, into a less graceful but more powerful world of figures bearing heavy burdens, figures beautified not by artistic canon but by the depth of feeling with which they are invested. In *The Prodigal Son,* Brancusi explored spatial connections not otherwise suggested in his work, opening the bottom of the piece so that one glimpses elements on its far side. At the same time, he so juxtaposed his shapes as to break down the four-sided regularity apparent in much of his other work, an effect he brought off even in as geometrical a piece as *The Sorceress.* In sum, Brancusi's wood sculpture is stronger, more daring, and simply better than his bronze and marble sculpture, although the fact that it fits less easily into the canon of "art" has made it more difficult of access even to the present day.

Brancusi's dilemma was neither more nor less than that of modernist sculpture in general. Tied as it was to outmoded ideas perpetuated by traditional methods of instruction feeding on the technical and logistical difficulties of creating large three-dimensional objects, sculpture from Canova to the present has had trouble finding its way. Even the best professional sculptors, including Rodin in his greatness, have dealt in conventional ideas and new approaches have had to germinate quietly in the work of sculptors not generally thought of as great artists—Barye, for example—or of artists not principally sculptors at all, such as Daumier and Degas. Not until the last few decades has this activity blossomed into a unified and viable modernist work based on fresh assumptions as to the nature of the sculptural object—assumptions, it might be pointed out, rooted in an ongoing tradition interrupted after Clodion by a briefly vital neo-classicism which rapidly froze into self-perpetuating didacticism. It was probably impossible for Brancusi, of provincial origins and trained as he was, to break wholly with the conventions as he had been taught them and the creation of a dual body of work, half apotheosis of those conventions and half denial of them, was the only practicable way for him to remain true to himself as well as to his training.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VERNON YOUNG

Nature and Vision: or Dubious Antithesis

In their introduction to *French Poetry Today*,[1] the editors, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Lucie-Smith, go far beyond *distinguishing* modern French poetry from English; rather explicitly they cite its superiority with a line of argument nothing if not French. Gallic criticism, like Gallic art, persuades by ellipsis; concentrating precisely on the subject it has framed for itself, it ignores all qualifications as extraneous and distracting. After establishing Nerval, Baudelaire, Lautréamont and Rimbaud as pioneers of the poetry that abandoned reality and proposed instead a whole range of purely symbolic structures, our editors observe with some regret that none of these figures (not even Rimbaud, with his "comprehensive and deliberate derangement of the senses"), however great his eagerness to overthrow *"the tangible and unacceptable universe"* (italics mine) seriously disturbed the order and traditions of French syntax and semantics.

> It was left to Mallarmé, in a long poem written at the very end of his life. . . . to mount an assault on the accepted ordering of words, abandoning rhyme, grammar and logical thematic progression in favor of an artificially imposed architecture of musical suggestion and more or less hermetic allusion.

This is suavely put and it becomes increasingly clear as their history gathers momentum that Mr. Taylor and Mr. Lucie-Smith are not content with recounting, expertly, the stages by which the symbolic, the surreal and the disjunctive saturated French poetry thereafter; they *cheer on* the process: their criterion for valuable poetry is, with small reservation, the *degree* to which the poet eludes any ill-mannered frontal engagement with the rational world in rational language. When forced to acknowledge that successive movements in this direction have not infrequently led poets into blind alleys of preciosity and blank obscurity—to say nothing of the appalling price paid for their journeys to the end of night (creative sterility, an early death, insanity, suicide)—or when they are obliged to approve of masters who can't wholly be appropriated for their argument (Valéry,

[1] FRENCH POETRY TODAY, A Bilingual Anthology, edited by *Simon Watson Taylor and Edward Lucie-Smith*. Shocken Books. $10.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

St. John Perse), they nimbly adjust their terminology to the "unfortunate" or "exceptional" situation, for all the world like Marxists, equally surprised by the consequences of their doctrine or by an unexpected deviation.

The major span of their argument is that English-language poets *refused* the French challenge, consistently choosing *nature* as opposed to *vision;* why? because Wordsworth's "value of everyday speech" and "emotion recollected in tranquillity" became law. That there were abundant reasons for the difference between English and French poetics which pre-dated by centuries Wordsworth and Baudelaire the authors never suggest in so much as a parenthesis. They are sensible enough to recognize that neither of Wordsworth's pronouncements has been fanatically sustained, yet they take care of the most troublesome exceptions (e.g. Coleridge, Poe, Eliot, Crane, Dylan Thomas and the Beats) by pretty well dismissing them as inadequate practitioners of the more subtle dislocations featured in French verse —as if these had all been French poets manqué! If their argument is not as bald as I have necessarily made it in summary appear, their inference is plain. French poetry, "employing a scale of imaginary values unrelated to social norms," inspired and perpetuated by wars of attrition aimed at the surviving remnant of feasible syntax, *cannot* be duplicated in kind by even the most talented English or American poet, ready and willing to be exquisitely deranged—*because he is not French!*

Given the premise, our cause is hopeless. If I don't rush to counter-argue, it's because I believe, first, that Anglo-American poetry needs no apology; secondly, that I shouldn't have to underline the fact that nature and vision (convenient terms, merely) are not separable exclusively by the English Channel. Against this one-sided defense of the French connection, however, I'm happy to remind my readers of E. M. Cioran's opposing view, published recently in this periodical.

> Mallarmé and Valéry crown a tradition and prefigure a bankruptcy; both are final symptoms of a *grammarian* nation. One linguist could even affirm that Mallarmé treated French as a dead language, "which he had never heard spoken."

Furthermore, Messrs. Taylor and Lucie-Smith pointedly fail to acknowledge that Baudelaire, himself, repudiated (too late) his ghastly pursuit of the inapprehensible, confessing, in his discourse on hashish, that the drive to transcend or to multiply the self ended in total depletion of the self. "I cannot understand why rational and spiritual man uses artificial means to achieve poetic bliss, when *will and enthusiasm* suffice to raise him to supernatural levels" (italics mine).

No earthly use for estimating *all* modern verse, the preface to *French Poetry Today* is immensely helpful to our reception of the French poems which follow; these, I feel obliged to insist, are by no means

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

uniformly inscrutable or devoid of references and values from the touchable world. (They are, by the way, sympathetically translated throughout, largely by the editors themselves.) Equally helpful are the biographies and bibliographies of 42 contemporary French poets. Obviously I can't even *pass* in review 105 poems. I can only observe what would be omnipresent in *anybody's* collection of French poetry today: the ambience of the surreal *is* dense and there is everywhere a compelled allusiveness, whether intricate or severely abridged, not immediately sympathetic to many Anglo-Americans, I'd venture. For the record, I'm sure there are poets represented who have been heretofore as unknown or as unfamiliar to most of my readers as they have been to me. I was especially pleased to encounter poems by Marc Alyn, Edith Boissonas, Jean Grosjean, Phillipe Jacottet, Pierre Jean Jouve, Jacques Reda and Armand Robin.[2]

Recalling the formulation, by Mr. Taylor and his colleague, of "a tangible and unacceptable universe," we can surmise with what incredulity or sorrow any of the numerous contributors to *A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry*[3] would greet such an abhorrent conception. In truth, if one were to take as an exclusive prescription the previous editors' requirement—the poem as an autonomous structure unaffected by or inexpressive of life as we daily endure it—we should have to reject Yiddish poetry in toto, for there is not a stanza, not a line (however intent the poet on creating a merely well-wrought inflection) which is not eloquent of *nature,* if by that word we are expected to encompass the whole urgent ordeal of man confronting the tangible and *desirable* universe and, deprived of it—especially is this true of the Jewish dispensation—confronting his Creator with the question to which he has seldom received a consoling answer. For although in these wonderful, mostly sad pages, concerns are mirrored which have nothing to do with persecution and exile, the perennial theme is, as one should expect, anguish, centered on the undying predicament and the unavailing lamentation.

> Being a Jew means running forever to God
> Even if you are his betrayer.
> Means expecting to hear any day,
> Even if you are a nay sayer,
> The blare of Messiah's horn;
> Means, even if you wish to,
> You cannot escape his snares,
> You cannot cease to pray—

[2] As a worthwhile supplement to Taylor & Lucie-Smith, I commend Patricia Terry's brief introduction to the French section of *Modern European Poetry* (Bantam, 1966), the best single volume of translated verse I've run across. Also, cf. *One Hundred Poems from the French,* by Kenneth Rexroth (Pym-Randall, 1972).

[3] A TREASURY OF YIDDISH POETRY, edited by *Irving Howe* and *Eliezer Greenberg.* Holt, Rinehart & Winston. $4.95 paperback.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Even after all the prayers,
Even after all the "evens."

(Aaron Zeitlin—"Being a Jew")

Self-evidently, the Jewish poet (whether writing in Hebrew, Yiddish or any other tongue) should be the last to feel the necessity for provoking a private hell with laudanum or alcohol in order to amplify the burden of his psalms and dirges. History has enabled him to dispense with such a luxury.

For the vaguely curious reader who will more than likely scan the contents of this volume haphazardly, perhaps reading idly a few pages of the introduction, I have a few stern words of advice: begin at the beginning, read every word of the editors' chronicle, wherein they locate the origins and, with vested authority, interpret the character, of Yiddish poetry; then read through the selections chronologically as arranged. Only so will you experience the full rich impact of a people mourning, interrogating, cursing—even ignoring, in favor of the near-at-hand—the fatality in which for centuries they have dwelled. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg have supplied a useful and enthralling outline of the several sources, ideological and linguistic, which have given Yiddish verse its idiosyncratic and unifying flavor. To support my all too scanty paragraphs of appreciation, I can only recapitulate the essential data: that the beginnings of a distinctly modern Yiddish poetry can be dated with certainty, 1907, when a group of immigrants printed the periodical, *Yugend,* rejecting, as subject matter for poetry, the political reflex and the national-Jewish campaign, aspiring instead to the aesthetic independence and symbolist refinement they admired *not only in the French sector* (Baudelaire, Verlaine and Rimbaud) but also among the contemporary Russians (Sologub, Bryusov, Blok) and the Germans (Dehmel, Rilke, Hoffmansthal). However, as I suggested above and as Howe (or Greenberg) declares plainly, the Yiddish poets' desire to achieve the *autonomous* poem was inexorably qualified by the brute fact that most of them were shop workers and tenement dwellers.

> The Yiddish writer did not work in a culture sufficiently at ease with the world, or even with itself, to allow for the kind of art that abandons any effort to reform—or even perhaps to reflect—the world in which it appears. The sense of aesthetic distance that allows writers to direct their energies toward formal problems of literature was not available to them, certainly not during the "classical" period, and as it would turn out, not even to those later moments when Yiddish poets struggled earnestly to achieve a "pure art." From birth the Yiddish poet was an "engaged" writer, and in that sense, if none other, he had indeed been chosen. . . .

Ancient echoes of rabbinical and biblical texts as well as all the earthly conditions of Jewish existence in the lost cities of Eastern Europe

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demanded a response and confirmed a value far removed from those of the Parisian or St. Petersburg modes.

> Yiddish literary life can never develop a full-scale aristocracy . . . and even its occasional ventures into Bohemianism are doomed to mildness. It is inescapably a plebeian culture, a culture of *folk-massen,* with all the gains and losses that may entail. . . . Is there another Western literature in which the major poets . . . spend their early years, and in some instances the whole of their lives, as shop workers?

Just there, of course, is the incredible primary condition we struggle to keep in mind when reading this verse, written in the ghettoes and outposts of Russia and Poland, in Lower-East Manhattan or in Palestine. It irritates my conscience that I can't quote an eloquent dozen or more: Mani Leib's "By the Threshold" and "Sparrows," Mani Leib Halpern's "Long for Home" or "Judging by the Desolation," M. Kulbak's brilliant *Childe Harold* or his magnificent "Vilna," ashen and exalted; Lazer Wolf's laconic ballad, "A Murder," Jacob Glatzstein's denunciations, Kadia Molodowsky's "God of Mercy," Celia Dropkin's breathtaking little exhalation of hatred—or the opulent and sonorous stanzas from "Spiritual Soil" by Abraham Stuzkever. With a fine sense of the dramatic (and of the *epic*) the editors have placed in the last pages the hopeful visions of an Israeli poet, Jacob Friedman, who, at rest for the hour in his tribe's homeland, impersonates in his mind's eye ("dreams, too, can be a home"), characters from the pre-Exilic past. One day he is Adam, with a red-haired shepherdess as Eve—

> . . . .
> Today I'm Jacob.
> At Laban's tent,
> Rachel is milking the white goats,
> Near the almond tree in the field,
> Uncle Laban approaches.
> I'm frightened out of my wits,
> Rachel hides her head among the goats,
> Her eyes filling with tears.

A deeply moving collection, imperishable record of an heroic episode in the history of man's art-speech: a treasury of the goaded human spirit.

When reviewing the difficulty of translating ethnic concepts and idioms, the editors of the Yiddish volume aptly remark, "There are poets who stand at the center of their culture—Pushkin is the obvious example—yet are all but inaccessible to outsiders." *Pushkin Threefold*[4] both disputes and verifies their observation: disputes it since

[4] PUSHKIN THREEFOLD, translated and with an Introduction by *Walter Arndt.* E. P. Dutton. $4.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Walter Arndt, an "outsider," clearly does not find Pushkin inaccessible; verifies it, because, even with the result of his brilliant linguistic labors before us, I doubt we can yet appreciate the enormous value Pushkin has had for his countrymen. I confess I've never been able to understand the unfailingly high esteem in which Pushkin—the man and the work—has been held in Russia, after God knows how many times I've made the effort to be impressed by that Bronze Horseman, forever galloping through the subsequent literature! Pushkin had most of the stock Romantic attitudes toward nature and vision: i.e. toward noble gypsies, dedicated monks, blushing women, eagles, Liberty and the ocean. If he expressed the attitudes uniquely, that uniqueness is likely to stay concealed from anyone who can't read Russian like a native. Dr. Arndt appears to read *any* language better than the native: his dazzling translations of Pushkin go far toward dispelling some of my (our) difficulties; notably by his splendid versions of poems not before translated into English, above all *Tsar Nikita and his Forty Daughters,* he confirms, beyond my earlier realizations, that Pushkin was indeed an accomplished wit. Actually, I don't want to stage a pro-con battle over Pushkin's rank and nature. As shocking as it may be for me to say it, the poet is in this enterprise secondary. Walter Arndt is the hero of this text. First, he made literal, linear renderings of the Russian original; these are printed opposite the Russian, just to make one wince. Then he converted the renderings into metric translations, any of which Byron, if not the subject, would have been proud to claim. To read the Russian and hence study the process of this threefold metamorphosis must be an enviable experience. For those having no Russian—and inconceivably having no interest in Pushkin *or* nineteenth-century Russia! —the dual English versions of each poem are in any case superlative revelations of the translator's art, creative scholarship of the highest order.

Likewise: the 25-page introduction—"musings on verse translation" —which Dr. Arndt claims with staggering modesty (and, I suspect, irony) are "eminently omissible for anyone not particularly interested in that art or craft. . . ." They are *not* omissible at all! If I were heading an English Department or College of Humanities I would make this essay required reading; no student would be permitted to graduate without having been examined on his inward digestion of the contents: captivating, sensitive, erudite. If there is a more professional, witty or subtle exposition of that delicate adventure, matching one tongue with another (which Arndt colorfully defines as "interlingual salvage operations"), I am not familiar with it; moreover, I disbelieve in its existence.

From wine to whisky:

> Though I suspect the term is crap,
> If there *is* a generation gap,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Who is to blame? Those, old or young,
Who will not learn their Mother-Tongue.

That's from "Doggerel by a Senior Citizen," by—superfluous to add—W. H. Auden.[5] Now an Old Master, we pinch ourselves to realize, he makes only one wide-eyed statement in his latest "slim volume": the prefatory quip . . . "at twenty I tried to/ vex my elders, past sixty it's the young whom/ I hope to bother." He won't; they have long since bypassed him. He is one of Us, neither young nor True Believers (except in redemption by lucidity) who, with both feet planted mid-Alantic, love language at least as much as we do Venus. However Time or Other Poets may use or abuse Auden, for us who have nothing to lose but our peace of mind as we decay into an age of house-wreckers, he will be cherished for persistently trusting the power of wit to achieve catharsis. If, among these late poems, there are none to endure with the centuries (who knows for certain?), they are welcome at this hour when we find ourselves laughing out loud far less often than we used to. They celebrate homecoming. Not only has Auden returned in body to Oxford; he has returned, as all weathered minds will, to the earliest conventions of the governing years (we might say here the *governess* years): twitting, fondly, his father's science, writing courteous farewell letters to fellow-poets and thank-you notes to God and to on-the-whole Good Health. Yet it may be asked if Auden ever left home, despite the Sagittarian excursions of his verse and his prolonged residence in the "new world." Actually he has never been *d'accord* with the advance suburbs of the twenty-first century; he tried them on for size. His speech retains, impenitently, the public-school idioms; like a don in a pub on Saturday night he plucks words from technology or medicine or current American slang, which he knows are not *de rigeur* in the quad, as who should say, "Rank confers privilege." Within sight and sound of that goddamned wingèd chariot, he shuns pathos, relegates the age of anxiety to his trunkful of souvenirs. The more solemn poems in this gathering ("Anthem" and "U.N. Hymn") are a bit embarrassing; togetherness is not Auden's forte; his natural pitch is one of irreverence, toward any hue or shape of the Olympian, and in these pages toward several of his juniors, including apparatnicks, sun-bathers, student radicals, myth-hunting literary critics—and disciples of Circe, against whom he warns: "She's not quite as nice as she looks, nor you quite/ as tough as you think." *Ode to the Medieval Poets* elucidates his present calm of mind, all rancor spent:

. . . . Long-winded you could be, but not vulgar,
bawdy but not grubby, your raucous flytings
sheer high-spirited fun, whereas our makers,

[5] EPISTLE TO A GODSON and other poems, by *W. H. Auden*. Random House. $5.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

beset by every creature comfort,
immune, they believe, to all superstitions,

even at their best are so often morose or
kinky, petrified by their gorgon egos.
We all ask, but I doubt if anyone
can really say why all age-groups should find our
Age quite so repulsive.

Irresistibly funny, I think, are *A Bad Night, A Shock* and *To Goethe: A Complaint.* And the final stanza of the closing poem, *Talking to Myself,* is a brilliant feat of curtain showmanship.

Time, we both know, will decay You, and already
I'm scared of our divorce: I've seen some horrid ones.
Remember: when *Le Bon Dieu* says to You *Leave him!,*
please, please, for His sake and mine, pay no attention
to my piteous *Dont's,* but bugger off quickly.

I'd like to think that publishers will get my point (poets won't) if I say that when I take time to defuse the booby traps set for critics on the jackets and in the introductions by half-crazed friends of the poets, I have already used most of the wordage needed for a succinct review. . . . Mark Strand, on behalf of James Tate,[6] asks us to imagine a man who has beheaded himself: the head, rolling on the floor, gasps, "I was only kidding. You can see now it was a joke." Presumably, this description gratifies the poet (as well as AMP). It leaves me with scant criteria to apply, since I don't believe poems can be written by the headless. Although, on second thought, that might very well account for many of the poems in *Absences* (I do appreciate the title), for in a system without a medulla there would be no way for the neurons to impart their impulses to the cyton. Michael Denis-Browne (in another part of the flap) says Tate's poems "have the potential of altering our way of seeing things." Nice understatement: they don't *alter,* mark you, they have the *potential* of so altering. But what nonsense this is! The language of *any* poet alters our way of perceiving; that's what poetry is all about! However, Tate is not primarily occupied with seeing *things;* he invents correspondences for inner stress. I find his inventions, in the title section of his book, uninteresting, and his state of mind unattractively negative. He is most comfortable, but certainly not arresting, in the tart and contemptuous "Best," or "The Immortals" or "Teaching the Ape to Write Poems." "Entries," an exercise of disingenuous tone, is my nomination for his best poem in this volume.

The same sort of prefatory drivel is advanced by Miller Williams.[7] "Nicanor Parra has taught us . . . to come to poetry with new eyes." I *don't need new eyes*—not yet! I might welcome new *perspectives* for

[6] ABSENCES, by *James Tate.* Little Brown & Co. $5.95; $1.95.
[7] EMERGENCY POEMS, by *Nicanor Parra.* New Directions. $8.75; $2.75.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my *old* eyes. And what perspectives do I find in Parra's verse? *Puta! fornicara! manifiesto!* Part of the new chic in the U.S.A. is for poets or critics to adopt a Latin-American and promote his claims beyond credibility. Williams has adopted Parra, a Chilean, and informs us that this joker (Parra *is* sometimes comical, if seldom hilarious) "has redefined the world in which the poem is written and the hand that writes it [*sic*]. Aristotle was not more challenged by Hume, nor Aquinas by Calvin" [*sic sic*]. Did I say beyond *credibility?* I don't know *what that's* beyond! First I thought Parra was a typical citizen of the Fourth World,[8] an undergraduate smart-alec blithely against everything because it's fun to be fashionable. I discovered that he is fifty-three and a professor of physics! The "antipoems" his host finds so intoxicating and revolutionary are, like Yevtushenko's, more often cute than subcutaneous. At his best he writes self-emptying, plain-language vignettes and odes about his parched and remote nation ("Chile," "Everything Seemed Fine Before," "The Borders of Chile"). In "Cuba" and "Viva Stalin" he pulls the lion's tail but he can switch with sinister irresponsibility from his ubiquitous *yo* to *nosostros: we* don't believe in, *we* repudiate, *we* are against! "I'm neither leftist nor rightist/ I just break the molds," he protests modestly. Perhaps, in another sequence, called "Telegrams," he faces his *hora de verdad:* "I don't know what the hell I'm writing for/ I guess I do it out of envy."

Diane Wakoski[9] frequently implies the same motive as she revolves above her bedrock theme: "You have what you were born with. No more./ How I have fought that rule;/ and worshipped it." Her poems, remarkably garrulous and obnoxiously confessional, have the nearly saving grace of a brackish humor and once in a while they take refreshing detours into the kind of fantasy that dispels the greedy self ("Her Throat," "Portrait of a Lady," "Vulture," "Sun Poem"), indicating that she might profitably infuse nature with vision if she can manage for longer than one day to see herself as a poet first, an injured female last, if not least. She can't now see an object in itself, a poet's first obligation; she's a salvationist, forever pointing a moral, gilding the lily, underlining the italics. "Without Desolation" and "Feet on the Ground" are poised performances all too rare in her work, analytical and restrained; they are epitomes she might paste on her mirror.

Eleanor Ross Taylor[10] is the opposite of all this. Her poems are pared to the least possible expression of the emotion that conceived them. James Wright (back cover) says, "I believe that anybody who cares about human life ought to read Mrs. Taylor's book." I know thousands who care about human life who, for want of clues, couldn't

[8] i.e. *the young.*

[9] SMUDGING, by *Diane Wakoski.* Black Sparrow Press. $15.00 signed edition; $4.00 paperback.

[10] WELCOME EUMENIDES, by *Eleanor Ross Taylor.* George Braziller. $5.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

begin to read Mrs. Taylor's book! And if they could, they might well complain that *because* they cared about human life, they'd like to have considerably more of it than Mrs. Taylor seems willing to spare. "Caviar to the general," writes Allen Tate, admiringly. Too rich a comparison: her poems are pruned sycamores—knots and fists and no protecting leaf against the cold sky. Richard Howard, in an introductory essay loaded with Ciceronian cadences (it would go down big if delivered to all those shirt-fronts at a Nobel Prize banquet), tells us that these poems are "natural miracles. . . . We have watched, or at least we have waited, for that American talent which would seal the pact between Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, between that private extremity which is a crying need and that public extremity which is an inward wound." I call this sort of writing *chums' rhetoric.* I think it does Mrs. Taylor's poetry no service at all, for either it will dictate anticipations which are preposterous or it will so outrage a self-sufficient reader that he will be unable to read the poems without prejudice. It outraged me, but I have more fortitude than the common reader. I'm obliged to have. . . . Her poetry *is* "kinda marvellous," as a friend of mine used to drawl—if art so uninvitingly austere can be described with such a superlative. I don't see how it's possible to get more characterization into a poem with less assistance for sensuous modifiers or connective tissue than Mrs. Taylor achieves; nor, any more obliquely, create metaphors (as she does with "Transplant," "Flight," "Escapee's Dream" and "His Wishes") and expect anyone but a dear friend to read and brood and re-read and read again. Personally, I'm more impressed by these and by the lyrics, "We are the Fruit," "The Dead," "Pause in Flight," than I am by the long title poem on Florence Nightingale or " A Few Days in the South in February" where (in both cases) the reality of war and the personal voices of, respectively, the Angel of Scutari and S. K. Wightman, are to a serious degree violated by the narrative text which is all too saliently in the manner employed for the more esoteric poems. Mrs. Taylor makes tyrannical demands; the reward she expects is consummately put within the solitary-confinement limits of this poem, "Iron Weed":

In poverty of soil,
in death of summer,
I bloom—
decree to bloom—
And in the color of kings.

William Matthews[11] has an attractive minor talent whereby single impressionist images are often more striking than the whole poem containing them. His back-cover advocate calls his lyrics "intense"—concentrated, I'd say, not intense—or finds them "passionate and at

[11] SLEEK FOR THE LONG FLIGHT, by *William Matthews.* Random House. $1.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ease with themselves." Passionate they are not—they circle the passions: at ease they are, when his fine touch is not shaken by a metaphor he has found with his brain rather than with his eyes. Matthews celebrates what he loves, and that's welcome, but he's guarded, conserving his enthusiasm because the world will end tomorrow anyway. Meanwhile he presses his eyeballs, then watches (and listens to) the pointillist vibrations. He's a poet of the night and the quiet, with a delicately cinematic (or automotive) sense of angle and movement. "The last beer is for the road/ The road's what the car drinks/ travelling on its tongue of light. . . ." "The snow seemed to be falling up/ smoke from silence's fire/ The headlights chase a dark ripple/ across some birch trunks."

The poems of John Woods[12] are those of an unquiet—which is not to say loud—American, secretly angry, left outside by all but the end of history, not yet grim enough to be emptied of regret or to live without the music of vanishing things and places; they give witness, they are populated, they strive toward wisdom. They haven't attained it; more often they express a biting sorrow or a grinding bitterness, dwell on lost loves (all those pelvi) and lost frontiers. The two decisive influences (beside, of course, Woods' given environment, with which he wrestles, a Jacob with his angel) were the War and the poems of Dylan Thomas. The War killed a root of expectation in him and incidentally left traces of latrine language his facility can well do without. Thomas enriched his own sweet faculty for recapturing nature on the move, so beautifully that where the accent is most audible we are not vexed at hearing another's style of declamation; we admire the aping as an act of love, embraced fittingly, turned with skill.

We usually praise a poet when he emerges from the shells of traditional forms to assert, in his own skin, his despotic freedom. Sometimes it seems almost a shame. We can see that Woods had to desert the sacred groves in order to hear the sound of his own voice, yet we linger with regret because he'll never repeat such triumphs as the lovely "The Day Shall be Known for Foxes" or the stunning sestina, "Poem by Water." Scanning his dates, we understand that he feels compelled to write poems against "Ike" and cash registers and the idiot-soft underbelly of California. He is too good for so easy a game when instead he can be exploring the maze of the feral self ("The Hate" and "Animal") writing memorably bleak Americana ("In South Chicago," "Just Driving Around," "Going to the Field") moping with good grace in the mock-troubador vein ("Now the Singing is Over") o'er-topping Phillip Larkin—"To the Waiters for Miracles,"

. . . .
No luck will save you, nor faith

[12] TURNING TO LOOK BACK, Poems, 1955-1970 by *John Woods*. Indiana University. $6.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in a letterhead. No benefactor shall name you heir.
For names shall die, and no horseman
suddenly visible, nor non-stop serum,
nor bread from stone
shall stop the fall of stone.
. . . .

or, reminding one of J. M. Brinnin (he is not as affable, and Europe, save through the anthology, has left no mark on him) with his several poems of origins and death, among the best, "Uncle," "Days," "The Old Man is Dying," and "The Visits of My Aunt." Today, Woods is at the crossroads where romantic irony, black humor and the sentimental meet. An ingratiating poet. One wishes him well.

A first book of poems by John Peck[13] raises comparison with those of any American poet who by one fiat or another has been named as the country's best (at best, a foolish pastime!). If I were to choose an emblem for his poetry it would be the pupil of an eye, in which one would see an oblique reflection of the four elements. (*How,* you ask, might one see the element, air, *reflected?* I can't say. I, too, claim poetic license!) No egocentric issues in these poems, and one can't glibly say what they're about: their range of attention is broad, their several methods far from one another; each poem has the precise form that enhances its value. Landscape is a loose term for defining his subject at large. The 'scape is sometimes but a point of departure, sometimes the ground and atmosphere of another world altogether, sometimes the mere *reflection* or *negative* of a landscape—then again it may simply be the final term in a series: the moment when all the perceptions in the poem come to rest. Without profuse quotation, which I can't afford, these distinctions must be taken on trust. "In Front of a Japanese Photograph" conveys something of Peck's eerie squint:

A sentry and a ladder mark the wall,
But shadows only, on the open wood.
Its paint was burnt away, though not quite all:
It stands yet where the man and ladder stood.

Sun making second morning at ground zero
Had photographed them, silhouettes on white—
Matchstick rungs and the flat outline, no hero,
Of the single human shape, erect and slight.

He might have looked into the glare, or not.
We make out only, once again, the wood,
And shadows cast by nothing at that spot.
And looking, that we stand where he had stood.

Few of his poems can be overtaken as quickly as this one, with its hair-

[13] SHAGBARK by *John Peck*. Bobbs-Merrill. $5.95; $2.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

raising clue in the title; in many the reader will be left behind if he's not quick to note the vocabulary of geology, falconry, bell-ringing, or to catch the presence of a plastic artist. Some of Peck's most majestic poems are those that translate the expressive form—more than that, the *event* behind the form—of a painter or printmaker. Poetic equivalents? better to name them essences, restated and augmented. The Colophon poems (on works by Ch'ien Ku and Chang Tse-Tuan) expound his art with generous elaboration, in lines that adjust their length, speed and color to that ancient scenographic medium, the scroll painting. Quite as extraordinary in another way is "The Turn," where Peck proceeds from initial image to abstract simile to visual analogies (viewed from a cloudbank) to an imaginary landscape under the aspect of time and from thence to the life-style of a mushroom! The poet who can incorporate a woman's neck, ruins seen by flyers, a sleeping tern and a steeping mushroom in six triplets without arriving at Bedlam or rupturing the reader's credulity relives Donne and is likely a finer prodigy than Hart Crane. Perhaps this brings me closer to explaining what does transpire in several of Peck's poems. One waits for the verse to illuminate a contention outside the context, so to speak, towards which the poem is moving, until you realize that the movement of the poem *is* the contention—like Peck's own concluding lines for the Ch'ing-ming Festival as constructed by Chang Tse-Tuan:

> His focus ends at a crossroads, at high noon;
> He leaves one to imagine
> The Imperial Palace
> Further on into late sun,
> Canto on tiered canto
> Bodiless, whole in splendor,
> Picturable
> But not pictured.

Gunnar Ekelöf[14] and Lars Gustafsson found diametrically opposed solutions to the root predicament of being Swedish. (That this *is* a predicament, for those endowed with excess of imagination, I should not by now be required to document!) Ekelöf, rejecting the neighbor world, retreated into an Orient of the soul. Gustafsson took full advantage of his polar-cap perspective, from which it is possible (on a cold clear night with a telescope) to envisage that strange global catastrophe in which the foolish non-Swedish world is perishing. . . . Ekelöf, who died in 1968, the unique poet of his generation, led a self-tormented existence, to which his elegant, impersonal poems rarely furnish a clue. His family background, reminiscent both of Ibsen's *Ghosts* and Strindberg's *The Ghost Sonata,* left him to the mercy—one should perhaps say to the mercilessness—of the private

[14] SELECTED POEMS by *Gunnar Ekelöf*. Translated by *W. H. Auden* and *Leif Sjöberg*. Pantheon. $5.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pledge and the dream, to an obdurate alienation from his own culture. "I learned to hate Europe and Christianity," he confessed. By dint of application, he learned to hate a large surface of the inhabited globe, present and past. (This is the authentic, but concealed, virgin spring of the Swedish Middle Way.) Ekelöf's immersion in Oriental languages, from which derived the fabulous poems in this volume, was as ambivalent as his other commitments (e.g. his fine translations of French poets whom on principle he otherwise repudiated).

> Why have I become interested in the Byzantine, the Greek life? Because Byzantine life, traditionally and by deep-rooted custom, is like the political life in *our* cities and states. I am intensely interested in it because I hate it. I hate what is Greek. I hate what is Byzantine.

Such wholesale immolation drove him to the border of suicide, in fact and artistically, when, in the Fifties, he fashioned a style of verse so exiguous as to be incommunicable—frozen, calligraphic, touched with obscenity—comparable in its way to the inhibited, self-abusing cinema of Bergman. In this frozen desert he nurtured a snowflush out of which incredibly bloomed the exotic penultimate poems, *Dīwān over the Prince of Emigion* and *The Tale of Fatumeh.* The first of these poems was allegedly inspired by a spiritualistic seance; its composition, begun in Constantinople, was dictated to him, the poet firmly believed, by an unseen medium. Take that or leave it: the *Dīwān* (it means simply a collection of poems) is an astonishing sequence of musical invocations, addressed by an 11th-century noble, captive and blinded, to a goddess, part-Madonna, part Earth-mother. (Ultimately, I am convinced, it is a parable of the tortured artist. "To be blinded sharpens the vision/ Till all is light/ the light of memory.") The other poem, likewise narrative-lyrical, which Ekelöf would have us interpret as a symbol of our interpersonal coldness, is told alternately in second-person and monologue form, the latter recited by the pathetic Fatumeh, reduced in her old age to the role of courtesan, after being abandoned by the Prince whose mistress she had been. Quite unlike any Western poems I can remember, these, punctuated by settings as solid and phantasmal as those of Chirico, are spiked with an odor of Eastern irony; their tone is Manichean, their dictation is crystal clear; they contain bizarre images of cruelty, passion and suffering which have a Sufistic resonance and calm.

> Your head breathes slowly and heavily, Fatumeh
> Expands and contracts
> As if it felt the heaviness
> Of its own weight on the pillow—
> The long threads of your thoughts
> And the tendrils of your thinking
> Your spring was blue, with a streak of red

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Red was your summer
And blood-red is now your autumn
You are like the jelly-fish
Flowering red in death
Trailing its long threads behind it
Your head tries to breathe
As you lie in the ripples on the shore
With scarcely enough water
To rise and fall in
There is no depth any longer
And no hope—Or is there still?
Yes, a hope of sinking into one's own depth of jelly
When the sea withdraws
And one is left on the sand
To shrink
And turn hard as stone.

W. H. Auden, in collaboration with Leif Sjöberg, shaped the bewitching translations.

The Swedish mystification with things as they are is translated by Lars Gustafsson[15] into spooky poems wherein the natural order of phenomena, viewed as disorder, thereby becomes an infinite source of ambiguity.

. . . .
Motionless night
and several insects which fly
unseen: darkness in darkness
and something frighteningly soft against the cheek.
What is it that frightens?
. . . .
Among the common insects in the lamp
there are always some who act *all too fast*
They are preparing ambushes.
. . . .
Everywhere the same, you raise a stone,
and they are in *all too* great a hurry.

Why such bad consciences?
Is there something they are preparing?
The species explain themselves
but only to themselves
. . . .

("Design for a Fantastic Zoology")

Situated at the center of what Gustafsson calls "the topographical labyrinth," the poet is baffled by appearances, disconcerted by the

[15] SELECTED POEMS by *Lars Gustafsson*. Translated from the Swedish by *Robin Fulton*. New Rivers Press. $5.00; $2.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nature of time and by the impossibility of revoking the past, apprehensive when observing the compass points: "merely by the thin membrane of an image/ are the depths of the world and the eye's darkness held apart." (The far-northerner's fear of perpetual darkness is a haunting undertone to this reflection.) His poems, then, are chronicles, essays, lyrics of the relative viewpoint, of the ease with which inevitably, to the modern mind, value is alarmingly altered by the position from which one views object, place, person, season—*history*. Not a novel proposition: what makes the poems enticing within the unity of optical, auditory and metaphysical skepticism is Gustafsson's quite un-Swedish capacity for evoking a profusion of seemingly disparate subjects and making them consort, in order to ask—what, in the hierarchy of value, does *this* signify? To affirm unreality intellectually can be merely a refined trick, a reiteration of Life's Visible Ironies. Gustafsson avoids banality by his fine attunement to interludes when memory seizes, from the flux of nature and vision, images (and sounds) which, ordered aesthetically, seem to call for a metaphysical explanation. For his most complex effort, *Dialogue of Love,* etc., he introduces a succession of themes you'd suppose would never synthesize—ice and the gold-yellow light of childhood afternoons, a polar convoy to Murmansk, summer at Oxford, the Warsaw ghetto, the inventions of Polhem—and orchestrates them with such tact and mounting suspense that at the end, as all the voices in the poem vanish and the final line repeats the first—"at last broad daylight"—you feel like rising to applaud. A pedigreed Nordic talent, uncommonly inquisitive, Gustafsson is an imperilled nervous system governed by a thoroughly educated mind, and at heart a true product of the Scandinavian cycle: praying to Odin for the sun to return; expecting a thaw; aching for summer; already in August hearing the eternal return, the harpstring under the green leaf.

> When the air rests the lakes also rests
> the large bright lakes still as quicksilver.
>
> The sleeping dogs breathe in ever shorter rhythm.
> The lowest sounds of all are felt like tremblings.
>
> And they are held hidden in large organ pipes,
> sixteen feet or more, till it is time.
>
> . . . .
>
> With falling air-pressure the sounds of the distant trains are drowned,
> they change and move soundlessly between track and track.
>
> A flying man who lives furthest within the wood
> has folded up his wings and sleeps in the rain.
>
> . . . .
>
> Too warm for freezing, too cold
> for living, so far within the world.
>
> (from "Bombus Terristris")

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MARVIN MUDRICK

Saint-Simon's Kingdom

SAINT-SIMON[1] IS CERTAINLY THE GREAT MEMORIALIST of peculiar behavior, never hesitating to interrupt his narrative with page after page of descriptions of tics and quirks. The Marquise de Saint-Hérem, for instance, "once succeeded in boiling her own leg in the middle of the River Seine, near Fontainebleau. The water had proved too cold for her liking when she was bathing, and she had had large quantities heated on the bank and poured around and over her, with the result that she was severely scalded and remained housebound for a week. In thunderstorms she had a habit of going down on all fours under her day-bed, and obliging her servants to be piled on top of her, so that the thunder might lose its effect before it reached her." When the Comte de Gramont "was 85 and mortally ill his wife tried to speak to him of God"; his busy life, however, had left him no time for religion, and "when she had finished he said, 'But, Madame, is what you say really true?' When he heard her recite the Paternoster he said 'I think that is a beautiful prayer, who wrote it?' " The Duc de Chevreuse, a man who couldn't be hurried,

> . . . used sometimes to keep his horses standing harnessed for twelve or fifteen hours at a time. One morning, at Vaucresson, he had decided to dine at Dampierre. The coachman first, then the postillion, grew tired holding the horses' heads. This was in the summer. By six in the evening, even the horses were bored. There ensued a tremendous noise that set the house shaking. Everyone rushed out. They found the coach in fragments, the great door of the house splintered, the garden gate that enclosed one side of the courtyard battered down, in short, complete destruction which it took a very long time to repair. M. de Chevreuse, quite oblivious of all the commotion, was much surprised when he learned what had happened. . . .

The Duc de Vivonne had little to do with his wife and wasn't on speaking terms with his son; but "when the son lay dying, M. de Vivonne was shamed into visiting him. He found him *in extremis* but did not approach, merely stood leaning against a table calmly observing him. The entire family were present lamenting. After a prolonged silence M. de Vivonne suddenly took it into his head to remark: 'Poor fellow! He will not recover. I remember seeing his father die in just the same way.' You may imagine the scandal caused by

[1] HISTORICAL MEMOIRS OF THE DUC DE SAINT-SIMON, A Shortened Version, edited and translated by *Lucy Norton*. McGraw-Hill. 3 vols. Vols. I (1691-1709) and II (1710-1715), $10.00 each; Vol. III (1715-1723), $15.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

those words, the supposed father being one of M. de Vivonne's grooms. M. de Vivonne himself appeared quite unperturbed, and after another silence left the room." The Marquis de Reffuge "was highly respectable, and sober, but vastly absent-minded. His valets sometimes took advantage of that fact to bring him at one time seven or eight glasses of wine, none of which he had ordered, and he would swallow all of them without thinking. Thus he was frequently drunk, and when he came to his senses could never imagine how it had happened." The Duke of Alba, a very old and eminent counselor to the King of Spain, was discovered by a French visitor

> . . . in a somewhat filthy state, on his right side between two sheets, where he had been for months past without changing his position or allowing them to make his bed. He said he had no strength to get up; yet his health was excellent. The fact was that he was in despair because his mistress had grown tired of him and had left him. He had sent out parties to search for her throughout the whole of Spain, and, such is piety in countries of the Inquisition, had had masses and prayers said in the churches for her return. Finally he had taken this vow to remain in bed without shifting off his right side until she was recaptured. . . . Many visitors called to see him, some of them of the highest birth, for he was good company. With that vow to hamper him he was unable to play any part at the death of Charles II or at the accession of Philip V, whom he never saw despite his protestations of loyalty. He carried on in this absurd fashion until the day he died, never leaving his bed nor turning off his right side. . . .

Such titbits suggest that the seventeenth-century high nobility, free to do almost anything, are liable to do almost anything: idiosyncrasies pop up in every unexpected shape and size, and Saint-Simon welcomes them all with generous enthusiasm. Where comment isn't called for, Saint-Simon doesn't offer any; but the vignette about the Spanish duke is more complex than the others because it touches on two issues—piety and political responsibility—that call for comment from a serious man.

Saint-Simon is a good French Catholic, partisan of "the Gallican Church" and enemy of "the ultramontane principle" of Papal supremacy; convinced that human authority must be plural, that the diffusion and localization of authority are as essential to religious as to political order; for whom the Pope is doubtless the Bishop of Rome and otherwise a parvenu ambitious for the rôle of autocrat of Christendom; a rational Frenchman horrified by the Inquisition and contemptuous of the claptrap of superstition with which the Spanish clergy keep their flock at heel; whose perfect confidence in distinguishing right from wrong doesn't admit the intimation that religion and reason may sometimes be at odds. Saint-Simon makes clear that a piety compatible with behavior as sinful and preposterous as the Duke of Alba's isn't worthy of the name ("such is piety in countries of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Inquisition"); that a nobleman who allows a fit of absurdity to disable him for his important political office is not only absurd but reprehensible. Yet Saint-Simon notes that the Duke "was good company"; notes the fact of his despair (and the antecedent fact of his passion); is fascinated by still another testimony to the boundlessness of human possibility: "This was such extraordinary behaviour," he concludes, "and so clearly proved that I thought it worth mentioning of a man who in all other ways was sensible and intelligent."

Saint-Simon isn't a taxonomist of the trivial, he isn't ever a cynic or a skeptic or even a wit (though he is often marvelously witty). He isn't the Anglo-American reader's favorite uncle, that dilettante and pyrrhonist the cultivated Frenchman (somebody like, say, Stendhal or Proust, each of whom regarded himself as a disciple of Saint-Simon's), though his epigrams may in isolation make him for a moment now and then seem so: "nothing upsets a cardinal"; "Mme Tencin and her brother the abbé were one in heart and soul, if they may be said to have possessed either"; "He passed among fools for being a man of sense." But Saint-Simon's epigrams aren't oblique and catty, fired on the run, intended to muddle and derange the will; on the contrary they serve his rage for clarity, for exact and complete definition, for the structure of truth bristling with qualifications:

> Bezons was a commoner, a coarse and brutal fellow who had run away from the parental home when his father wished to make a priest of him. He enlisted as an ordinary soldier in a body of troops going secretly to Portugal, and fought there in the ranks. His father's inquiries soon established his identity; he was promoted, and served with keenness and industry. The Latin which he learned before joining was all the education he ever received, but he none the less became a good general, especially skilful at manoeuvring a wing of cavalry. His rudenesss, however, and his evil temper often prevented him from seeing other men's points of view. All in all, he was a man with much personal courage, not unfamiliar with the idea of honour, but always at a loss, very diffident, a trimmer, with a great desire to arrive and make a fortune. He was also vastly mean and vastly boring, not entirely devoid of commonsense, with a small talent for intrigues of short duration, and possessed of a fairly sound judgment. He had a leonine head of huge dimensions and blubber-lips, the whole surrounded by an immense wig, which would have made him a good model for Rembrandt, and looked all of a piece with his great body. He passed among fools for being a man of sense. . . .

This force, assurance, headlong straightforwardness, candor; the colloquial and asymmetrical ease of the phrasing (from a *Grand-Siècle* chronicler who records the deaths of his contemporaries La Fontaine, Boileau, Racine); the indifference to tidiness and mere consistency; the absolute fidelity to a single point of view without spite or malice—they are all characteristic Saint-Simon. Bezons is one of the more ob-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scure among the thousands of men and women whom, during thirty-two years at the French Court, Saint-Simon knew and committed to his journal in a storm of epithets and anecdotes that, chronological centuries and political millennia later, continue to strike with the velocity and distinctness of hailstones. The *Memoirs* were unpublished and virtually unknown in Saint-Simon's lifetime, they couldn't otherwise have been written; but the energy they radiate is unconditional, and nothing seems more unlikely than the fact that they were private papers.

The *Memoirs* include everything (for instance, they have more first-family genealogies than the Bible), and they are far less episodic than they appear to be in samplings. Even idiosyncrasy isn't merely Saint-Simon's comic relief, indeed it fascinates him because he considers it the secret spring that moves or stops the world; it accounts not only for the Duke of Alba's dirty sheets but for the rise and fall of empires. According to Saint-Simon, everybody freely chooses to do what he does, which is often strange enough to prevent him from ever again finding the way back to simplicity, love, and reason; kings and princes freely choose the traps into which they permit themselves to be driven, and empires fall. The Duc d'Orléans, Saint-Simon's lifelong friend, an intelligent, likable, complicated, and not wholly corrupted man, Regent of France after Louis XIV's death, commits moral suicide by choosing as his principal adviser the odious Abbé Dubois ("All the vices fought for mastery in . . . [Dubois]. Avarice, debauchery, ambition were his gods; treachery, flattery, subservience, his expedients"). But decades ago, in his childhood, the Duke had had Dubois thrust upon him, as his tutor. But the Duke might have escaped if he had not himself chosen to live a debauched life that weakened and eventually destroyed his capacity for resisting wickedness in others. Dubois, not yet a priest, demands to be made Archbishop of Cambrai. Exclaims the Regent scornfully: "You, Archbishop of Cambrai! A man like you!" Dubois insists, and quotes precedents of other (as Saint-Simon calls them) "vermin, eccentrics, and perverts" without vocation or previous experience appointed to high clerical posts. "M. le Duc d'Orléans was shaken; less by such hollow arguments than by his inability to stand against a man whom he dared not even contradict. He tried to escape by exclaiming, 'You shark! Where will you ever find another willing to consecrate you?' 'Oh!' said Dubois, 'if that is all, the deed is as good as done; for there is a man in the next room who will be glad to officiate.' " And bounds into the next room from which he plucks the Bishop of Nantes, who does the deed. Within a year he is in correspondence with Rome to be made cardinal. The Regent, having been informed,

> . . . burst out laughing. "Cardinal!" he cried, "that little worm! You must be joking, he would never dare." And when Torcy showed him proof, he lost his temper, exclaiming that if Master Impudence had any such notion, he would clap him into a deep dungeon. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

several times repeated that phrase, in fact whenever Torcy produced fresh evidence, from foreign letters, of the continuing intrigue. On the last occasion, when the hat was almost won, Torcy heard the same words repeated with equal fury. Yet when he visited the Regent next day, at the Palais Royal, M. le Duc d'Orléans beckoned him into a corner to say, "By the way, Monsieur, please write to Rome in my name, requesting a hat for Monsieur de Cambrai. Do not delay, speed is essential."

A year later, having heard that Dubois is about to be made first minister, Saint-Simon visits the Regent: "he looked worried and abstracted, and indeed he asked me several times to repeat myself—he, whose mind was ordinarily far ahead of mine, who loved to joke on the gravest matters, especially with me, saying outrageous things to try my patience, and then bursting into laughter because I always got angry." Saint-Simon is full of affection, pity, concern, and, as usual, the best and lengthiest advice: "He had only one thing to do, I continued, prefer good to bad in every kind. . . . Let him reflect that his present ways became disgraceful after the age of eighteen or twenty. The racket, the language devoid of all decency, were utterly degrading, while drunkenness effectively banished any last shred of dignity or good breeding that might still cling to him. . . . I ended by entreating him to remember that for years past I had said nothing of his personal conduct. I should not mention it now had he not forced me by showing me the awful abyss into which he would fall, if boredom alone drove him to appointing a first minister." The Regent listens, makes a joke or two, confesses to his old friend that he has "lost all desire for women," agrees that Dubois is as bad as can be. The next day Saint-Simon reappears renewing the siege with volleys of unanswerable arguments and horrid historical examples, to which again the Regent listens till at last "he turned towards me without raising his eyes, and in a low, unhappy voice exclaimed, 'We cannot go on like this; he must be appointed at once.' " So Dubois becomes prime minister and the *de facto* ruler of France.

Saint-Simon denies that it all had to happen. He is as thorough a voluntarist as possible, in his actions at Court as well as in the pages of the *Memoirs:* he keeps resisting wicked men and supporting the good or at least the well-intentioned, keeps believing that the light of reason can penetrate the self-deception of kings and princes, never surrenders, keeps hurrying up and down the corridors seizing and rattling the bars of all the cages. (Once, though, for a moment, his spirit almost fails and, as he contemplates twenty-four years of an honest courtier's disappointments and disasters culminating in the untimely death of the prince who might have been not the great but the good king of France, he is compelled to admit that "I found it very hard not to despair.") He is quite Promethean, challenging the heavens for the sake of justice and his beloved France; but he manages to avoid retribution—he would have out-talked if not out-wrestled

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

any avenging angel sent to fetch him—and survives by many years the events of his epic narrative.

The *Memoirs* have a subject, nothing less than the destiny of France; and three tragic protagonists: Louis XIV, the Duc de Bourgogne, and the Duc d'Orléans. Louis is of course the grandest and the most fully considered. For Saint-Simon he is not the good but the great king of France: he has already reigned for forty-eight years and ruled autocratically for thirty when Saint-Simon comes to Versailles in 1691; he is the Sun-King, whose bright or clouded face determines place and fortune; by the time of his death in the seventy-second year of his reign he is the only imaginable king (when his pages wept at his deathbed he said, "Why are you crying? Did you think I was immortal?"). Because the nobles had attempted a rebellion against him when he was the child-king, he would never learn to trust them. As soon as he had the power he set about eroding their ceremonies, their prerogatives, their independence, their advisory influence, their pride; built Versailles to keep them out of mischief away from their estates and under his observant eye competing for his favors; reserved political office and advancement for commoners who owed him everything and whom he could unmake with a word, men who had "the one essential quality without which no man could, nor ever did, enter the council of Louis XIV during his entire reign (save only for M. de Beauvilliers), viz., a total lack of breeding."

Because his bastards too have the luck of owing him everything, he grants them unprecedented status at Court; toward the end of his life even dares establish them by proclamation in the line of succession to the throne; obliges the legitimate children of the royal family, as well as his royal cousins the Princes of the Blood, to accept them in marriage till it would take Aquinas to judge the degree and propriety of the relationships all ascending to Louis as if to Father Adam. For example, Louis obliges the young Duc de Chartres (later Duc d'Orléans), the son of Louis's brother, to marry Louis's bastard daughter and therefore the Duke's first cousin Mlle. de Blois. Eighteen years later their daughter (Louis's granddaughter-grandniece) is deemed by Louis suitable for marriage with one of his legitimate grandsons the Duc de Berry, the young couple therefore sharing the King as their grandfather. (Louis seems to have thought that closing the family circle was as important as cementing foreign alliances by royal marriages: he enjoyed having lots of company at Versailles and Marly, and he felt more comfortable with blood-relatives.)

For an autocrat, Louis is a surprisingly devious, indecisive, anxious man. Incapable of dismissing anyone directly from court or from a governmental or military post, he signals his loss of confidence by a repertoire of snubs intended to break the victim's spirit (but, comically, ineffective with a troublemaker and thorn in the side as resolute as Saint-Simon, who is always ready to reinstate himself by drawing the King into a catechism of air-clearing and getting-down-to-cases as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between indulgent father and respectful son). If confrontation is unevadable, the King prefers that it be one to one: perhaps because of his memory of the rebellion a half-century earlier, he "feared and disliked anything smacking of a concerted action," so that, for instance, if the dukes wish to approach him on an issue of ducal privilege, it will never do for more than one of them at a time to seek an audience with him. Nor does he like to make decisions concerning the various factions at Court that are jockeying for advantage: he stalls and temporizes, and seems really uneasy and distressed to be caught in the middle. He insists on the courtiers' presence daily as a mark of their submission ("I do not see him," says the haughty King, expressing his displeasure with one nobleman or another who isn't continuously visible at Versailles through the four seasons), he won't delegate the most trifling judgment on protocol, he insists on holding and, when pressed, exercising all power; but his insistence lacks the tyrannical relish, so that his monopoly of power seems, if not just a habit, a consequence of his fear of powerlessness; he is the chief clerk in this Kafkan palace of mirrors. No doubt things were different in his heyday, and Saint-Simon, coming on the scene after a half-century's reign, has missed much: the many mistresses; the successful wars; great ministers and soldiers like Colbert and Turenne; the great writers. Now Corneille and Molière are dead, followed in the early years of Saint-Simon's chronicle by La Fontaine, Boileau, Racine; the wars go badly; the ministers are flunkeys, unequal to the burden of a nearly bankrupt war economy; the King himself is a miracle of longevity, his person and manner more and more majestic and awe-inspiring, but rather a prig and conventional Papist under the influence of Mme. de Maintenon (his legal but officially unacknowledged wife), his Jesuit confessors, and his old age. Cabals form, gain ascendancy, are on the verge of triumph, collapse with the sudden deaths of their leaders or figureheads, and the years pass in the claustrophobia of Versailles as it seems more and more likely that the King, lacking any other conspicuous virtues, is only omnipotent and immortal.

All of the King's feelings in his old age are mortgaged and encumbered—except the pleasure he takes in his granddaughter-in-law (and grandniece) the Duchesse de Bourgogne: "an adorable princess," says Saint-Simon,

> . . . whose gracious charm and kindness had so completely captured the hearts of the King, Mme de Maintenon, and Mgr le Duc de Bourgogne that even their extreme vexation with her father the Duke of Savoy could not lessen their delight in her. The King kept no secrets from her, worked in her presence with his ministers, and was careful for her sake not to speak against her father when she was within hearing. When they were alone she would jump on to his knee kissing and hugging him, and with pretty teasing ways

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rummage through his papers, opening and reading his letters[2] (sometimes against his will) and treating Mme de Maintenon much the same. Yet she never made mischief for anyone, indeed she was kind to all and softened the blows whenever she could do so. She was considerate of the King's servants, even the humblest, gentle with her own household, and lived on terms of easy intimacy with all her ladies, young and old. She was the life and light of the Court; every one adored and lived to please her. When she was not there everything seemed flat and dull; her presence enlivened all the pleasures.

In 1711 the torpid and mean-spirited Monseigneur, heir to the throne, quite suddenly dies. The Duc de Bourgogne, whom Saint-Simon already reveres and whose friend and adviser he will soon become, is Dauphin; one of the new Dauphine's intimates is Mme. de Saint-Simon. It is Saint-Simon's *annus mirabilis*. One evening the Dauphine, amusing the King with her usual airy nonsense, notices disdainful looks from the ladies of the late Monseigneur's cabal:

As soon as the King had risen and moved to his inner study to feed his dogs, the Dauphine seized Mme de Saint-Simon and Mme de Levis by the hand, and pointing to those princesses, only a few feet away, cried: "Did you see them? Did you see them? I know as well as they do that I behave absurdly and must seem very silly; but he needs to have a bustle about him and that kind of thing amuses him." Then, swinging on their arms, she began to laugh and sing, "Ha-ha! it makes me laugh, Ha-ha! I can laugh at them, because I shall be their queen. I need not mind them now or ever, but they will have to reckon with me, for I shall be their queen," and she shouted and sang and hopped and laughed as high and as loud as she dared. Mme de Saint-Simon and Mme de Levis whispered to her to be quiet lest the princesses should hear her, and the entire company think that she had taken leave of her senses, but she only skipped and sang the more, "What do I care for them? I'm going to be their queen!" and so she continued until the King's return. Alas! sweet princess, she believed what she said, and who could have thought otherwise? But for our sins it pleased God very shortly to arrange matters differently.

In a few months she is dead at 26. "With her death all joy vanished, all pleasures, diversions and delights were overcast, and darkness covered the Court"; and Saint-Simon adds, with a perhaps pardonable lapse into the clairvoyance of fiction, that "The King and Mme de Maintenon were penetrated with the most violent grief, the only real grief which he ever experienced." A week later her husband is dead also (in that awful year for the King, not only his special darling but

[2] From which she did not scruple to transmit information to her father. The King found out ("The little wretch has betrayed us!" he exclaimed), but he didn't mend either his ways or hers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

three of his heirs—his son, his grandson, and his great-grandson—die: conspiracy and poison are suspected; but nothing is ever proved); and with the Dauphin, as Saint-Simon believes, dies the hope of France:

> The noble and most Christian precept that kings are made for their peoples, not peoples for their kings, was so firmly implanted in his heart that splendour and war were hateful to him. It thus happened that he sometimes argued too forcibly against war; he was carried away by truths too hard for the ears of worldly men, and on that account people often said maliciously that he was afraid to fight. His justice was blindfolded with all the thoroughness that safety requires. He carefully studied every case that came to the King for judgment at the various councils, and if any great matter were involved, he worked with the experts, consulting their opinions, but not slavishly adopting them. . . . He perfectly understood the King, respected him always, and, towards the end, loved him as a son should do. He paid him homage as his subject, but always retained a proper sense of his own rank. . . . He loved his brothers tenderly and his wife with passion. His grief at losing her broke his heart, and only by a most prodigious effort did his religion survive the blow. It was a sacrifice which he offered without reserves and it killed him; yet in his terrible affliction he showed nothing mean nor common, nothing unworthy. . . .

These virtues of moderation and self-constraint he had had to notice and learn and choose; for he

> . . . was born with a violent temper and in his early youth had been terrifying. Hard and choleric to the last degree, subject to transports of rage even against inanimate objects, furiously impetuous, unable to brook the slightest opposition, even from time or the weather, without flying into a passion that seemed likely to destroy his entire body, he was stubborn beyond measure, mad for all kinds of amusement, a woman-lover and at the same time, which is rare, with an equally strong propensity in another direction. He loved wine and good eating just as much, was passionately fond of hunting and listened to music in a kind of ecstasy. Cards delighted him, but he so hated to lose that it was dangerous to play against him. In sum, he was a prey to all the passions and loved all pleasures. . . .

Saint-Simon sees him for the last time soon after the Dauphine's death: ". . . he neither moved nor spoke. . . . I dared to take him by the arm, saying that he must sooner or later see the King, who was waiting for him and must be longing to embrace him, and that it would therefore be kind not to delay. Then, gently urging him to start, I took the liberty of giving him a little push. He gave me such a look as nearly broke my heart and immediately left the room. I followed him a little way and then went to recover myself. I never saw him again." Within a week on his own deathbed, knowing that he is dying, the Dauphin chooses a death of piety and peace:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Such thankfulness he expressed that he was not required to reign and render an account of kingship! How humble, how excellent he was! How truly he loved God! How clearly he saw his own sins and unworthiness! How modest his hopes! How peaceful his mind! How marvellous his understanding of God's mercy! How holy his fears! How long he read and prayed; how eagerly received the Last Sacraments! How deep his self-questioning! How invincible his patience; how kind, how considerate he was to all who approached him! In his death France suffered her final punishment, when God disclosed to her the prince whom she did not deserve. Earth was not worthy of him; he was already ripe for the joys of Paradise.

Saint-Simon carried the *Memoirs* forward through the events of another eleven years, till the end of the Regency; he worked on them through most of the rest of his long life, and their power is unaffected by the death of his hope. Like the Dauphin of his exalted peroration, he was a painstaking, responsible man. He had a loving and gracious wife who advised and comforted him, and who as he said "made his life's happiness"; the best among the courtiers sought his friendship, and never broke with him once he gave it. (He was a tiny man, this fiery particle, this "butt-end" as the Court wits dubbed him, wearing the highest heels at Court. He had no luck with his children. His two sons were dull and unpromising, and he did what he could to obtain honorable positions for them. His daughter was so hideously deformed that the Saint-Simons assumed she would never marry: nonetheless a noble but almost ruined suitor, who thought that Saint-Simon's influence with the Regent might accomplish wonders for him, insisted on marrying her over her father's explicit denial—"in his usual emphatic manner," reports a contemporary—that he would ever intervene in any official matter on behalf of a member of his family.) The King, who could hardly have been unaware of Saint-Simon's frequent, forceful, and outspoken disagreement with much that he did and allowed to be done, learned after years of suspicion and coldness to respect him: worried about the bad company that the Duc d'Orléans was keeping, the King remarked that "M. de Saint-Simon is a good friend of my nephew; I wish he had no other, for he is an honest man, and always gives him good advice. I am never anxious on that account. I only wish he did not follow the advice of others." Saint-Simon was an active, meditative, and observant man, as continuous in all three aspects as if contradiction were unthinkable among them: no question of affection or policy inhibited his sense of principle; no question of principle inhibited his attention to what was actually going on. He had scores of close and loving friendships, and never betrayed them or was compromised by them. In concert with others or alone, he acted on his convictions. His fearlessness and probity were acknowledged even by his enemies, who deplored them as dangerous self-indulgences. He was the conscience of the Court, the faithful Kent and Horatio of Louis's tormented kingdom, and he lived to tell the story.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Those Who Can't

"WE ARE ALL ANXIOUS THESE DAYS—anxious about what our society has been and is, as well as about its future—but college teachers of English maybe more than most. We are more anxiously anxious. Having made ourselves the cultural conscience of others, the accusers of our society, we now see ourselves in moral jeopardy." This accurate remark, one among many in Martin Green's valuable new book, best serves to usher in itself and three other recently published books by anxious English teachers of various persuasions and breeds of anxiety.[1] With classes beginning and my own anxiety quotient on its annual upswing it is time to set things in order, preparatory to having them scrambled in some new unforeseen way. This private stocktaking has been furthered by a castigation (from an old Summa classmate-pal, now living in a California commune) in the form of a poem no less, about how I thought the world was words and T. S. Eliot when in fact there was My Lai and (you guessed it) Auschwitz. Twenty years ago at graduation he had given a stern speech on how words musn't be confused with reality, so I suppose he's consistent. And not spending his days in wordy classrooms he would be a more right-on reader of the Kampf-Lauter volume of "dissenting essays" (dedicated to George Jackson) than was I.

Not to say for a minute that they aren't provoking, these guys and gals who have seen through the English profession for what it is—little more than one gigantic "Lay-on." The contributors are very attached to this counter-cultural word, which signifies how, in the words of the editors, "an established tradition and its monuments" are laid on the poor student who really should be finding out about literature's relationship to "social change" or should be encouraged in the struggle to articulate his anger, his needs. Bruce Franklin, who leads the field in contempt for white male English teachers like me, had the tradition so thoroughly *laid on* him at Amherst and Stanford that it has taken all these years for him to become a Maoist, now takes bitter delight in articulating his anger: "Only a highly civilized professor would compel people to read T. S. Eliot, who tells them they are trash stuffed with straw, or Jonathan Swift, who tells them that they are shit-smeared monkeys." The vulgarity of this needn't hold any reader up for long; we understand why he talks that way, and it is amusing to see that even the editors don't go all the way with Bruce—

[1] THE POLITICS OF LITERATURE: Dissenting Essays on the Teaching of English, ed. *Louis Kampf* and *Paul Lauter*. Pantheon Books. $10.00. SOMETHING ELSE, by *Jonathan Bishop*. George Braziller. $8.95. THE IRRELEVANT ENGLISH TEACHER, by *J. Mitchell Morse*. Temple University Press. $6.00. CITIES OF LIGHT AND SONGS OF THE MORNING, by *Martin Green*. Little-Brown. $15.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"we think Franklin is mistaken in his assessment of Stalin's analysis of world revolution"—sentimental revisionists that they are![2]

Leslie Fiedler's harsh and astute review of these essays (in *Change*, Summer 1972) should be consulted on how collectively dreary is their prose, and how dutifully they go about "footnoting their rage and anguish." (The model may be Chomsky's compulsive footnoting of his political polemic.) But Fiedler muddies the waters by assenting much too quickly to the most obnoxious sentimentality in the book, that, in Richard Ohmann's term, the "fix" we're in is mostly the fault of an ogre which ruined all of us who went to school in the 1950's—The New Criticism. The editors try to bring this fix to immediate and memorable attention with the fable of "Martin" who is supposedly one of us—your friendly college English teacher:

> He has been at it for seven years and things are not holding together. Under his feet, something is sliding. His students, when they come to class at all and if they enter a discussion—neither of which, for many, is usual—are inclined to divert it from Swift's *Modest Proposal* to last night's TV riots in Northern Ireland or to Bernadette Devlin's pregnancy or even to the bottle throwing in the Chicano quarter across the highway.

Are they indeed so inclined? But hear more: this Martin fellow is up for tenure, seems to have written his dissertation on Crabbe (!) and now, when he'd rather be reading eighteenth-century slave narratives (as who wouldn't, evidently) he has to grind out articles on old Crabbe. Meanwhile "Professor Pillsbury" across the way runs a tight ship, insists on attendance, gives quizzes etc. and doesn't have Martin's problems. What anti-profs Kampf and Lauter would like the reader to do here is say, yes I know Martin, better yet I *am* Martin, so please boys help me out. But I say nonsense, I really do know someone who wrote his dissertation on Crabbe, who would probably still rather read him than slave narratives, and who hasn't ground out articles on him either. I recognize Poor Pillsbury as an easy-to-scorn straw prof from a 1930's Hollywood College Musical. And I have taught *A Modest Proposal* with varying results. Why doesn't young Martin figure out something good to do with it, since he is doubtless bored with explicating the irony? Ah, but he was crippled by New Criticism, therefore doesn't have a notion in his head that literature has anything to do with The World, thinks it's just words on the page, alas.

Blame New Criticism, blame, as Ohmann does, the Fifties—"the dim Eisenhower years" (as opposed to the bright Kennedy-Johnson ones?) though Ohmann admits that it was exciting to be studying literature in college back then. Is it not still? I teach at what I have

[2] I must admit to some pleasure in reading about myself: "This ignorant,self-deceived parasite, perfect butt of the satire he so admires, does indeed have an important role in the twilight hour of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. He is in charge of molding opinon as to what books are good and bad . . ." There's something left for me, even at twilight time.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recently learned to call an "elitist" school, but there are just as many and no more students capable of interesting and original responses to books as there were twenty years ago when I fancied I was one of them. Even if there are too many old Pillsburies and young Martins around, is not this what we call the Necessary Imperfection of Human Imaginations and Intelligences? It seems there are also doctors who make wrong diagnoses, and unscrupulous lawyers, and ministers full of hot air. Many of my classmates in grad school weren't so marvelous and I am not 100% admiring even of my present colleagues. Granted there's not a much more deadly activity than somebody trying to do a "New Critical" analysis of a poem, but if the analyzer doesn't bore himself within a month or two of such going on, blame him, not New Criticism, or the Laying-On of Culture, or Amerika. Or indeed, blame *her:* Ellen Cantarow, the lead-off contributor goes on about how dismal things were at Wellesley back in 1963, patronizes with rich kindness her prof ("an honest man of good intentions . . . my good and honest teacher") who, along with her was another victim of—you guessed it, the N.C. Then at Harvard Graduate School she found herself in "Walter Bate's classroom" and things were even worse—why there was no stimulating discussion! I too was in one of Walter Bate's classrooms, and there was indeed no discussion as he "laid on" lectures about Samuel Johnson, reading from the galley proofs of his not-yet-published book. But they were good lectures, and I also remember Bate slouching in one rainy miserable Cambridge morning and apologizing for bringing us all out in such weather when the subject of his lecture was merely Oliver Goldsmith.

But there is barely room in these essays for even one small touch of nature; instead the contributors all have Ideas. Florence Howe pushes Small Groups (the next time I hear somebody suggest we break up into small groups, I plan to draw my revolver). Ellen Cantarow admits that though Pope's "Characters of Women" moved her, as did Yeats's "Easter 1916," she has since found out that "these things bespoke opposition to revolutionary activity" and that Yeats's sorrow and resignation were "treacherous." And she writes the following appalling sentence: "Another art was needed." Note the passive construction, followed by a very long footnote indeed. These concerned men and women have discovered then that there is the sense in which teaching Pope and Swift and Yeats and Eliot is irrelevant. A good place to start from; once you accept it you won't be tempted to love your analysis of "Easter 1916" for too many years on end, and you may not even be able to revere The Great Tradition of English Studies in ways that will justify devoting your life to it. There remain many astonishing possibilities for interesting ways of staying alive and reading Swift in the bargain to yourself and with your student. All the teacher has to do is make them up, thus earning his salary. So I say, to Barbara Bailey Kessel who allows that "My first years of teaching, though joyful at times, were filled with a general frustration. My students were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not being humanized by contact with *Huckleberry Finn* or *The Scarlet Letter*"—I say, resist the temptation to use words like "joyful" and "frustration"; think about whether anybody should ever be "humanized by contact with" anything, let alone those odd novels. Then just hang in there, and like others of us you may become convinced that as teachers, men and women improve with the years.

After such glum confessions it is a relief to hear from other actual English teachers, instead of fake Pillsburies and Martins. A few years ago Jonathan Bishop wrote an excellent book on Emerson; now he has written *Something Else* in a manner analogous to the way Emerson was always writing about Something Else. Bishop says in his preface that

> The material is drawn from about fifteen years of an ordinary American academic life. The private history thus erratically mined extends from the close of a psychoanalysis to a baptism. . . . Autobiography and treatise are mixed in an unusual but, I hope, not merely private way. The risks of eccentricity seemed worth taking, just to get some things said.

This sensitive apology in advance is no idle gesture: the book's plot, very crudely, moves from words and solipsism, through more words and despair to the possibilities for Encounter, Community, God. But I think it is not the risk of eccentricity that is sometimes bothersome in Bishop's narrative; rather, his insistent Close Reading of ordinary happenings for what they may portend, "enfigure," deeply mean. Let me illustrate by quoting from the last page of the Foreword, where the writer muses about how little time there is left "to address even our friends" with Apocalpyse upon us at the beginning of the Seventies. Typical of Bishop's procedure, an autobiographical anecdote or illustrative fable is produced. He is buying groceries, but something else happens:

> In the IGA in Collegetown this hot July morning a child ran a shopping cart over his mother's sandaled foot. Her toe was cut. As she waited in line to unpack and pay for the groceries she nursed her wounded foot in a pink paper napkin. When she lifted it a thick drop of dark blood marked the puncture.

Bishop-the-shopper smiles at the woman, "as if to apologize for the way things were," but she doesn't respond; then the child tries to push past her, she pushes him back, and he wails. Bishop-the-writer reads it thus:

> From his point of view the gesture was unprovoked; he had not meant to hurt his mother. I turned away, not wanting to see her lose control. Everyone else too pretended nothing was happening.
>
> That drop of blood outweighed our errands, the artificial coolness of the store, the Muzak, and the glittering traffic jamming the streets outside. We did not know how to make it count then. Still, I mean to try.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This elegant writing could be a novelist's, but reading subjectively and Emersonianly, I immediately resist its intentions. It has too many designs on me: is the foot really "wounded"? Should I shiver over that "thick drop of dark blood"? And what about the "glittering traffic" outside? Less picayunely, what *was* happening here, and how much should it count? What about another possible reading like, "Shopping with children, especially in July in Collegetown, Ithaca, can be a real drag. Still, let's not make it count all that much."

Reading on I found myself always interested, often admiringly absorbed in the illustrative anecdotes, particularly when their setting is nature—the protagonist walking across a gorge at night as the snow falls ("Crossing a bare common . . .") or domesticity—what it's like to help your son learn the art of bike-riding. At other moments something goes wrong, as in this vision of destruction accomplishing itself through the illustrative vehicle (literally) of driving one's car:

> To be in and of that composite dream, this metallic addiction that has trapped us all, is to participate in the defining action of the city, to represent its intention in specific miniature. How many solitary points of consciousness in automobiles there are at any given moment! . . . One hundredth of America—consists literally of this single materialized thought, a humming in place stretched out and sliced. To participate in such a consciousness blanks out history. "Don't bother the driver," we say, "who starts in at one place, tunes out, and very tired, pulls up somewhere officially else." The interval is only a sequence of minute adjustments in nowhere, the nightmare country we dream wide awake, the one trip that blows everybody's mind.

This seems to me smug in its inability to imagine the kind of driving I do (or Bishop does?). Sometimes I am headed for Saratoga, N.Y., perversely using NY State 22, up through Massachusetts to the Vermont border, encountering a hailstorm on the way which causes me to pull over to the roadside, then delightedly driving through Nowheresville, U.S.A. (officially called North Hoosic, N.Y.). At other times I see how much of Lowell's "Quaker Graveyard at Nantucket" I can still remember, and the blank verse rushes out then trails off. When I, tired, pull up somewhere officially else, I tend to procure a drink and find it immensely satisfying. No nightmare country traversed; my mind resolutely not blown. Sometimes you can even get something going on a dull trip downtown. My advice is to avoid the turnpike-thruway, see what you can find, play it loose with your driving self; but such advice to readers wouldn't fit the apocalyptic, portentous tone Bishop is anxious to create.

Bishop wants us to do what he's been attempting over the past few years—to reach out, to make a theater in which we stage our conflicts: "We are not melodramatic enough" he proclaims. That of course is a matter of taste, for I find him often too melodramatic, too soft on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Actual Encounter Group he participated in, too soft in general on late-Sixties "reachings out" for community, all the way down to the book's closing vignette of a party at end of summer, where they sit around the fire and "Some smoked pot, gently" (Why do *they* always smoke pot *gently*? Don't any drink booze, roughly?). I mean it as no dismissal of this original book to say that, compared to Emerson or Henry Adams, Bishop doesn't write enough sentences no intelligence can understand: his prose is too easy on the ears and, like the pot-smoking, too gently, wryly knowing about "our" predicament. But he is a good enough English teacher to provoke in his reader a refusal to be wholly assimilated into the world of this author's supple imagination. Very well, I say, but I am Something Else. As Frost claimed to have said to a Catholic priest (Allen Tate just having left them) "Are you a convert too, Father?" When the priest replied that indeed he was not, Frost stuck out his hand and said, "Shake!"

It is a long way from Jonathan Bishop's ruminative nuances to the bright surface harshness and amusing common sense of J. Mitchell Morse, defender of the Irrelevant English Teacher. Morse thinks of himself as somebody not who lays it on but who lays it on the line, as he does in these scrappy, contentious, unrepentant-liberal essays. What does he believe? He'll tell you:

> I believe in the development of a critical, skeptical, humorous habit of mind—in the development of a liberally educated consciousness, a sensitivity to nuances and unstated implications, an ability to read between the lines and to hear undertones and overtones—both for the sake of political and social enlightenment and for the sake of our own personal enlightenment and pleasure as individuals. . . . I believe that the cultivation and refinement of our tastes . . . is a good in itself.

Somewhere around 1968 I got the distinct message that you weren't supposed to talk this way anymore; but these essays were written over the last five years and nobody has silenced Morse. He makes lists of unhumorous types without that critical, skeptical habit of mind—Lester Maddox, John Wayne, Richard Daley, Strom Thurmond, Richard Nixon—but is just as unenthusiastic about LeRoi Jones and Rap Brown, while as for Bruce Franklin's hero—"Mao tse-Tung is the Norman Vincent Graham of the Communist world. The corn is as high as an elephant's eye." Morse dislikes the authoritarian arrogance of radicals, whether of the left or right (he maintains they're all really on the right) and still believes as an English teacher that it matters how a student puts sentences together, matters in judging a good piece of student writing that style and substance be treated together as inseparably as they would be if the object were a piece of high art. And he is unwilling to let English classes "degenerate into bull sessions, whether about large metaphysical generalities or about war, civil rights, pollution, our national priorities etc . . ."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Morse's sentiments found enough echoes in my bosom that I finally felt embarrassed, ready to condemn us both as self-righteous know-it-alls, prating about standards, hardening into reaction. But no: Morse is funny, and makes absurdly unfair lists that put together Hugh Kenner, Tim Leary, and the Beatles. He has the nerve to think he can get away with getting Freshmen to imitate literary styles—like those of Cicero, St. Augustine, Dr. Johnson, Thoreau, Veblen—after which, he swears, students (or some of them) "develop a sense of form and some facility in devising form" and thus "begin to have the technical resources with which to develop individual styles." At the same time his tastes are resolutely avant-garde (a list of good writers to read with the kids includes Beckett, Robbe-Grillet, Butor, Borges, Landolfi, Böll and Gunter Grass) and he once, in a review, dismissed Amis, Barth and Pynchon with the adjective "trashy"—so I don't feel much more at home with his contemporary literary pantheon than I expect I would be trying to get students to imitate Lyly. Which is to say no more than that he is unpredictable, an individual, totally distinct—as is Jonathan Bishop—from the White English Prof Spectre gleefully invoked by the Kampf-Lauter gang.

The last and best question Morse asks is "Who Shall Teach Freshman English."[3] Why this question now embarrasses us is one of Martin Green's preoccupations in the first chapter of his new book. In the last one (he has written six), *Yeats's Blessings on Von Hügel* (1967), Green revealed himself as a Roman Catholic whose liberal brand I suspect wouldn't differ greatly from Bishop's. And as with Bishop's, Green's new book has been neglected since nobody knew what to call it and its own subtitle—"A Cultural Psychology for an Age of Revolution"—didn't help. It has its roots in Green's late-Sixties anxiousness about the meaning of it all, of teaching English in the university, of being a Liberal—temperamentally an Erasmian, as he terms it—in a world increasingly dominated by Radical Faustians or Calvinists. I will not busy myself with explaining these classifications, nor with tracing Green's journey in later chapters through the cultures of various cities at various times in history (London, Edinburgh, Weimar, Havana) but will confine myself to what his opening chapter calls the Seven Fat Years of English teaching we experienced and the Seven Lean Ones which have followed them. In the 1950's and early 60's *we* were the ones, we thought, who saw through and were called upon to expose the shams and mendacities of American pieties. We could think of ourselves as Radical as long as salaries rose, the kids were respectful, and everybody got Tenure. Then in the later 1960's things got rough and we were exposed: "We have most of us played the radical, and now find we never meant it. There are too many things radicalism legitimately can mean which, now we are faced with them, we find we don't like. . . . The typical English department member has been a crypto-liberal, disguised as a radical, a sheep in wolf's clothing."

[3] Morse's answer—"Full Professor!" I agree.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But there is a further, most important and original point in Green's reading of our recent history; namely that the sheep thought they could most safely and satisfiedly graze by teaching Sidney and Spenser, or Conrad's novels, instead of Freshman Composition:

> [the Freshman English programs] decayed because young teachers in the pride of the New Criticism—the Spock children of their intellectual generation—began to demand to teach literature and not composition.

When Freshmen began arriving at colleges like Tufts (where Green teaches) better able to turn out a "college paper passable enough in grammar and paragraph structure and footnotes" then

> Instead of intensifying their idea of composition in response to the new situation, English departments reacted by offering the sonnet or the myth or some other exotic reading matter. And more recently, as the demand for relevance made itself heard, they added *The Communist Manifesto,* and *Civilization and Its Discontents* and Marcuse.

So Green concludes, we squandered our strength and threw away our position, and we have something to expiate.

My own experience is that sheep may not safely graze in any good Freshman Composition course, since you never know, teacher or student, what's going to happen next. Ideally this is true in any good class, but when the subject is literature the teacher will inevitably know more about it and will be able in a pinch to discourse on the sonnet or on Conrad's other books. There is no such out in a Composition course, where the subject must be the way a particular student has put words together to talk about his experience or, if literature is involved, his experience of the poem. Green has testified in this book and elsewhere to the possibilities of using literature (Emerson, the Nehls Composite Biography of D. H. Lawrence) the better to help a student compose himself. And I think both he and Jonathan Bishop might be moved to agree with Mitchell Morse's insistence, in his chapter called "Literature as Subversion," that "We must integrate the teaching of literature with the teaching of writing," that "literature and composition should be taught together at all levels, including the graduate level." Let us therefore have no more whining about how New Criticism has ruined teaching by neglecting society, but no acceptance either of Fiedler's gruff certainty about how he (and Wilson and Kazin and Howe) were never confused for a moment "about the fact that literature is not words on the page but images in the head, and that head in society." *Society?* Nobody yet has been able to tell anyone how to integrate the teaching of literature with the teaching of writing, and I should think only a good radical conservative could bring it off. But the activity of trying is about as relevant a way for English teachers to behave as I can imagine, young or old, in lean years and fat. Those who can't not make the attempt, teach.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

J. E. CHAMBERLIN

The Arias That Spiritual Fiddlings Make

THAT "THE SAME SPIRIT INFORMS ALL the products of a culture"[1] is a teasing thought, tickling our fanciful yearning to discover coherence and meaning in the history of mankind's several endeavours. But discovery and invention are merely categories of convenience, and criticism is a convenient invention, existing to provide imaginative, verbal satisfactions (or, as a typographical error in one study nicely has it, "satisfictions"). It is an open, and to many a rather vexing, question whether an aesthetic experience itself appeases man's "rage to order" or his "rage for chaos," but criticism certainly satisfies the former, by exercising our faculties of invention, taste, and tact. In some exercises, it becomes convenient to postulate "a fundamental aesthetic of which poetry and painting are manifestations" (the phrase is Wallace Stevens'), and to which we respond according as we (Pythagoreans all) are in tune, or have a taste familiar, with it. And something of this sort of scheme is germane to all studies of the relations between art and literature.

Using as a model Vladimir Propp's morphology of the fairy tale, an arcane critical discussion of archetypes, Mario Praz suggests in *Mnemosyne: The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts* that perhaps

> a basis for the parallels between the arts can be found here. The various media, then, would correspond to the variety of characters in fairy tales: the proposition that the characters vary, while the function remains the same, would find a counterpart in another proposition: the media vary, the structure remains the same.

The perception of this ubiquitous structure is apparently facilitated by a particular kind of memory, a sort of aesthetic currency which, in the words of Antonio Russi, "does not assume in art a subsidiary or ancillary function as happens in normal life, but is, itself, Art, in which all the various arts are united without residua." By the manner in which it sustains the argument of Praz's book, and is said to determine our response to all art, one might well imitate George Bernard Shaw, and reflect that in any given period this "aesthetic memory," like money,

[1] MNEMOSYNE: THE PARALLEL BETWEEN LITERATURE AND THE VISUAL ARTS, by *Mario Praz*. Princeton University Press. $15.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> is the one hopeful fact of (that) civilization . . . It represents health, strength, honour, generosity and beauty as conspicuously as the want of it represents illness, weakness, disgrace, meanness and ugliness. Not the least of its virtues is that it destroys base people (bad critics) as certainly as it fortifies and dignifies noble people (good critics). It is only when it is cheapened to worthlessness for some and made impossibly dear to others, that it becomes a curse. In short, it is a curse only in such foolish social conditions that life itself is a curse. For the two things are inseparable: money is the counter that enables life to be distributed socially: it *is* life as truly as sovereigns and bank notes are money. The first duty of every citizen is to insist on having money on reasonable terms. . . .

Such an assumption can lead, as in *Major Barbara,* to some rather disconcerting conclusions. Like Cusins, one can be persuaded of *almost anything:* for example, that a curve "induces movement, articulat(ing) the façade of (certain) churches like a fugue . . . a ceaseless throbbing transform(ing) the solidity of the stone into the mobility of the wave." Or, more precisely, we persuade ourselves, with a misplaced metaphorical contortion (my love is like a red, red rose, or a greenglass insulator on a blue sky, so why shouldn't a particular church façade be like a fugue?) that eliminates, rather than illuminates, the object of our aesthetic attention. E E. Cummings' poetry may very well put some readers "in mind of the achievements of Mondrian, Kandinsky and Klee in painting . . . elaborat(ing) a free technique in which the very signs take the place of imagery," but the analogy is really nothing more than a magician's distraction, a momentarily engaging gesture, compelling our attention while something happens elsewhere. That something which happens elsewhere is the aesthetic experience.

Regretting the passage of an imaginary time when the golden section was recognized in everything from the triangle to the Trinity, and wondering "whether the great Anarch, Chaos, is not on the point of letting the curtain fall," Praz is happiest in an earlier age, when aesthetic memory was in common currency. But even then, despite wide (and eccentric) knowledge, and great enthusiasm, he is too liable to critical exhibitionism. William Hazlitt's remark that "the critic . . . undertakes to formulate a verbal equivalent for the aesthetic effects of the work under consideration" is used to imply that impressionistic criticism becomes dated, and is usually anachronistic, a comment which is itself dated and anachronistic (like Praz's characterization of *art nouveau* as frivolous, which is both true and stupid). What Praz does not seem to realize is that Hazlitt is also reminding us that all criticism, of whatever sort, is a figment of language. And to say, as Praz does, that Richard Crashaw's hymn (on the Latin text of the "Jubilus de nomine Jesu") "envelops the spare structure of the Latin hymn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in the folds of his inebriated rhetoric, just as Bernini transformed the classical statue of *Antinous* into the wind-blown *Angel with the Superscription*" may be to say much, may even have a "sudden rightness" about it, but it is a figment of language, a verbal fiction, before all else.

Robert T. Petersson's book[2] on Teresa, Bernini, and Crashaw, though not pinnacled quite so dim in the intense inane, does not share the felicities of its title (*The Art of Ecstasy*), for it is precisely the fault of his intriguing study of the art of "ek-stasis" that the author is unable or unwilling to disengage himself sufficiently from his subject matter. His wry epigraph from Roger Fry, about "one art mixing with the other and all together producing a state different from one of aesthetic comprehension" is all too true of the book. The tone is devotional, and highly affecting; but neither so critical, nor even so empirical, as the author evidently (from his prefatory remarks) would wish. Throughout the book there is a finely baroque quality, a sense that the writer, in Leo Spitzer's words, "says something with the full consciousness that one cannot actually say it." The "literary" feature of Bernini's art, his use of a *concetto* to center the meaning of a subject, means that the formulation of a comparison between Teresa's autobiography, Crashaw's *Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Saint Teresa,* and Bernini's Cornaro chapel in S. Maria della Vittoria, is more easily effected in words than might otherwise be the case. In addition, Petersson takes good advantage of an increased interest in symbolic forms, organic structure (with its concomitant ecology), and dialectical energy or tension, to imply a coherence which shall be called Baroque. The case is persuasive, partly because it relies on fashionable enthusiasms (Piaget is called in to tell us that we are born with a sense of movement, Worringer that space is a metaphysical consciousness, Focillon that there are no straight lines in nature), and partly because of Petersson's honest argument, which accords with the opinion of Ernst Kitzinger that "a *Zeitgeist* may be an historian's construct . . . but I do not see how any really deep and meaningful interpretation of a major historical style can do without it or some equivalent term." It probably cannot; but then perhaps writers on affinities between art and literature should not try so zealously to isolate major historical styles.

The contriving of illusions, certainly a central feature of Bernini's work, is acclaimed by Petersson, but its significance seems rather to be missed (though the author does refer mysteriously to its "deeper purposes"). Bernini himself remarked that "art consists in everything being simulated although seeming to be real." What is equally important, is that it should be seen to be simulated. The mixture of naturalness and artificiality in the figures and materials of

[2] THE ART OF ECSTASY: TERESA, BERNINI, AND CRASHAW, by *Robert T. Petersson.* Atheneum. $8.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Teresan chapel; the contradiction between tension and relaxation, and between continuity and climax, in the ecstatic figure of Teresa hereself; the symbolic emblems and forms in the chapel which "simultaneously hide and reveal the mysteries of the faith"; the carefully wrought ambiguities of the entire work—these are the qualities which, *because* they are unresolved, make Bernini's work both so typical and so unique. Yet although Petersson recognizes this, and quite clearly illustrates it, he does not take advantage of it to affirm the comparison which he wishes to establish with Crashaw. For precisely similar elements—Crashaw's lovely musical verse conflicting with his sparse, common diction; the subject of his poem not quite transcending its Skeltonic form; the presence of Teresa defying the absence of much description; the linguistic conceits and paradoxes—define the qualities of Crawhaw's hymn which are analogous to those of the Bernini chapel. (The much-vaunted synaesthesia, what Gombrich calls "a splashing over of impressions from one sense modality to another," while evident enough in the poem, is not really of much help, and can be quite a red herring in a comparison between the two works of art.) As for the *Vida de Santa Teresa de Jesús,* it provides a context for devotion, and if the analogy it supplies is not on the level of tension, ambiguity, and outright paradox, then I do not know (and do not find out) where it is, and I can make no sense at all of the assertion that "the *Vida* is not so much an architectural form as a rushing current of meaning."

The ingenuity of writers intent on illustrating affinities between the arts must be exercised primarily for the purpose of providing some of Wölfflin's "reciprocal illumination," for why else bother? One has suspicions, especially when terms are used which are strictly applicable to no particular art, and when generalizations, borrowings from the language of mediation, about significant form, or *Raumgestaltung,* or Luminous Details, replace any exact attention to the works themselves. "With usura is no clear demarcation." But it is the sight of those gleaming, sharpened medieval knives, before which only a saint would not flinch, that provides the most stringent test, and F. P. Pickering[3] is not likely to be bettered at his task of both demanding and displaying exact standards, and a delicate precision. His book is a very fine one, and although its subject is special, its method is exemplary, and its wit delicious. Pickering insists that any system of comparative description must not take us away from the reality which that system seeks to organize, and wisely reminds us that any of the arts "were in their own day modern art, and by their strangeness prompted associative thinking." If we do not simply

[3] LITERATURE AND ART IN THE MIDDLE AGES, by *F. P. Pickering.* University of Miami Press. $15.00. This book originally appeared in German, in 1966, under the title *Literatur und darstellende Kunst im Mittelalter.* It was translated into English, revised, and enlarged by the author.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forget this, we often discount it, usually because of poor scholarship; and it certainly is precise (primarily iconographic) scholarship that proves the case for this kind of associative response in the medieval art which is Pickering's subject. Such scholarship is perhaps, and sadly, old-fashioned, and goes along with the old-fashioned belief "that style is not something a poet has in common with his age, but something that he still has when we have explained everything else that can be found out about his work." The lights need not go out all over the civilized world, however, though that kind of common sense could well put a lot of us out of business; for Pickering has comfort of a somewhat ambivalent sort.

> This does not mean that there is no way of examining literature and the neighbouring arts at the same time, and of writing of them as mysteriously, or perhaps inevitably harmonious expressions of the spirit of their age. I mean merely that this is not the task of any academic discipline. It can only be the work of a poet—a poet reflecting, or, as Schiller called it, thinking and writing 'sentimentally' and formulating his reflections on the office of the poet and other artists, and the modes of expression available to each.

Firmly resisting what seems to be for many scholars an irresistible urge to seek sanctuary in the medieval cathedral, Pickering concentrates on what he calls a semantic inquiry into a variety of medieval images, assuming that "just as every word has its history, so has each image." This history is studied with the recognition that, particularly with subjects such as the iconography of the Crucifixion, questions and answers often cannot be entirely "in line." This, not just because not all sources provide evidence of one kind, nor even contribute to one and the same kind of "truth," and therefore do not create a homogeneous set of relationships between source and subject; but more importantly because such clusters of relationships as those involved in Christian knowledge exhibit what is essentially a self-sufficient economy. It would be well if scholars and critics would pay closer attention to such economies as exist in the arts, in the writings about those arts, and in the literature or verbal traditions, between which they wish to establish relationships; and if they would not try so hard to obtain answers to those questions which one art form raises, from other art forms, esoteric lore, or cultural phenomena, which may not share the specific criteria that are necessary to nourish a catechetic tradition. Occasionally, Pickering's style displays a certain hideus pedantry, as he

> comes to a consideration of our variant 3(b) with its provisional interrogation mark. How shall we associate Walther von der Vogelweide? With difficulty, of course, and only with some assistance from David in his role as court musician . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or a cute superiority, as he crows (in a footnote!) that "some readers will know at once what incident I have in mind." But generally the work is wisely and wittily devised.

No less medieval in spirit, though incorrigibly modern in subject, is Hugh Kenner's study, *The Pound Era* (reviewed by William H. Pritchard in the Summer, 1972, issue of THE HUDSON REVIEW). I mention Kenner's book here because it is a particularly pure example of a way of talking to advantage about various of the arts together, through the presentation of a kind of aesthetic *Heilsgeschichte,* in which a particular artistic canon is used to provide a paradigm for an entire aesthetic attitude, and therefore to illustrate prototypical formative artistic energies, energies which are exemplified in analogous artistic forms. Appropriately enough in a book about analogous forms, and like those Church Fathers who first defined the critical genre which he adopts, Kenner employs the pun, and the more general rhyming of subjects, forms, sensibilities, cultures, as what F. P. Pickering calls "an instrument of proof, not merely of the rightness of names, but also of the origins of things," merging etymology with higher criticism in an attempt to map the semantics of translations and transformations, to "convey the energized pattern" which assures the rhyming of one form with another. The poem is not its language, nor the knot its rope, which only makes visible the knot—a consummate model for discussing affinities between the arts, analogous artistic energies. And so Paul Klee could say that "art does not reflect what is visible, but makes things visible." These "things" are "patterned integrities," making manifest a specific *virtù,* the artist's "style."

"Hem was audio," claims Henry Strater. It is the opinion of E. S. Watts,[4] repeated interminably in *Ernest Hemingway and the Arts,* that he was visual as well. And Mrs. Watts has evidence: Hemingway once told a group of friends in Chicago that "you've got to see it, feel it, smell it, hear it." (One of the disadvantages of a book *about* Hemingway, is that one is forced to read comments *by* Hemingway.) And we're off, "toward a single art," the effecting of a total sensual response, an interplay of the senses, a radical synaesthesia, the important early advocates of which were, according to Mrs. Watts via Marshall McLuhan, "Rimbaud and Baudelaire, both precursors of the Dada and surrealist movements, and Paul Cézanne." There were, I might add, some rather earlier advocates, among them (to use Robert Petersson's short-list) "Montaigne . . . Marino, Quevedo, Du Perron, Hofmannswaldau, Jerónimo Baía, and Jean Auvray. In a sonnet, Lope de Vega describes Marino as "a great painter for the ears" and Rubens as "a great poet for the eyes," and Marino himself, who divided the poems of his *Galleria* into "Pitture" and "Sculture," asks a painter to help him

[4] ERNEST HEMINGWAY AND THE ARTS, by *E. S. Watts.* University of Illinois Press. $8.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

depict the death of Adonis, and in the process makes a pun on *penna* (pen) and *pennello* (brush). Marino influenced not only English, French, and German poets, but Poussin and other painters . . . "No matter, for Hem creates a 'fifth dimension,'" a tactical advantage over Apollinaire, and a strategic one over everyone else. Apparently, "Hemingway used the interests of his age as a springboard"; and "the surrealists used Freud as a springboard" (one shudders at the implications); and Mrs. Watts uses the opinions of a host of Blake's idiot generalizers—critics all, mostly of art—as a springboard. She lands, feet first, on Hem.

> Hemingway consistently used certain colours for definition of specific qualities or elements. Dead people are nearly always yellow, unless they have been dead long enough to be yellow-green or black. The faces of peasants or of healthy men who work outdoors, such as Pedro Romero, are nearly always brown, sometimes tan or ruddy. Conversely, when Hemingway specifically mentions a white face, such as Lady Brett Ashley's in *The Sun Also Rises,* the reader is alerted to the indoor, unhealthy qualities of the character. Such a pattern of colours is not the result of intellectual or artistic laziness on Hemingway's part. Yellow bodies and brown faces are images grounded in reality. Dead people do, in fact, appear to be yellow, and the complexion of a woman like Brett would be white. . . .

From this, it should be obvious that "Hemingway has created a colour orchestration based upon the most modern of colour theories." There were, indeed, a variety of colour theories, from those propounded by Goethe, Schöpenhauer, von Bezold, Runge, and Ostwald, to the fulsome elaborations of Kandinsky and the mathematical contrivances of Schrödinger, which were called "modern" in the early years of this century, but Mrs. Watts is not specific; indeed, she refers to none of the above, confining herself to some (reasonable enough, though mainly second-hand) comments on Cézanne's colour modulations, and mentions Delaunay (the last hope) only once, in passing. Klee, Miró, and Masson are forced into company, and it turns out that what they have in common is a wish "to humanize, mobilize, naturalize, and poetize the still-life immobility and formal intellectualization of cubism." This is coffee-table stuff, and illuminates neither Klee nor Masson nor Miró very much. Certainly, it has little to do with Hemingway. It is almost purely a verbal fiction, invented to accompany the works of art, or more exactly the artists; and administers an effective, mind-numbing local anaesthetic. Benumbed, it is impossible for us to respond with the tactile sensitivity that Mrs. Watts is so anxious to bring into play, and we end up bumping drunkenly against the ghosts of Cézanne and Goya and Bosch and Gris and Klee. Some of the ghosts are especially ghastly, and I must admit that I left

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the room screaming when the portrayal of the sea and the fish in *The Old Man and the Sea* was compared with Klee's "Kampfscene aus der komisch-phantastischen Oper *Der Seefahrer*" (1923) and "Um den Fisch" (1926). The only connection I can see is by way of Ezra Pound's remark from the Chestnut Ward of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, after Hemingway's story had appeared in *Life,* that "one of the fellows in my ward . . . thinks it's a pretty good job."

Mrs. Watts is good up to a point on the affinities between Cézanne and Hemingway, affinities which were insisted upon by Hemingway himself, though it would have been worthwhile to mention the unwieldy obviousnesses, as well as the deft illusions, which are so characteristic of the techniques of both artists. She also has some sensible comments about Goya, particularly regarding the physical energy which his works contain and compel; but to emphasize too much of a debt is to run the risk of forgetting that Walter Pater likewise advocated

> being present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy . . . Gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch.

And Ruskin—why doesn't anyone remember Ruskin? Even Kenner, otherwise so encyclopaedic, misremembers.

> The whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the *innocence of the eye;* that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify—as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight. . . . Very few people have any idea that sunlighted grass is yellow.

Ruskin, in 1856. When William Carlos Williams espoused the autonomy of the object, especially of the art object, he was not so far from Ruskin as he would have liked to think. In *The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech: Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams,* Bram Dijkstra[5] makes much of the idea, to which Williams was attracted, that

> the artist must take the utmost care to speak through the objects themselves, to let them keep their autonomy, their non-metaphoric, real, organic solidity, their absolute, self-contained meaning as objects.

"Without consciousness of what they signify." Williams, of course, was much more sentimental than Ruskin; in a suitably American fashion, he insisted that the work of art both provide an objective counterpart (equivalent, correlative) to one's emotions and one's

[5] THE HIEROGLYPHICS OF A NEW SPEECH: CUBISM, STIEGLITZ, AND THE EARLY POETRY OF WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS, by *Bram Dijkstra.* Princeton University Press. $7.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

national or local identity, yet still be unmediated by a consciousness of what it may signify, or mean. Dijkstra rather confuses the issue by failing to distinguish between the meaning of an object, and what (and how) an object means. In this, he does his book a grave disservice, for in our perplexity we nearly lose sight of its central argument, that Williams' poetic derives much from that of Stieglitz and his group, a poetic nicely summarized by Arthur Dove, prescribing *A Way to Look at Things:*

> Works of nature are abstract.
> They do not lean on other things for meanings.
> The sea-gull is not like the sea . . .

Certainly, "in studying the work of these men . . . Williams learned how to combine the elements of visual composition which he had taken from his study of French painting with the subject matter and visual accuracy of his American contemporaries." But Williams also displays a failure of nerve which almost obliterates the felicities of his poetic, and he is often saved only by his compelling sincerity—itself likewise a rather fashionable virtue in his time. If Dijkstra were more critical in his use of the categories of aesthetic experience which his sources threw about like confetti, then we might be more persuaded of various features of Williams' work: for example, that it is not "anecdotal." Or why, according to Williams, it is more important to tell "that the moon is/ tilted above/ the point of the steeple/ than that its colour/ is shell-pink." It might be difficult to persuade Kandinsky, who is quoted three sentences earlier in support of this radical new poetic.

Dijkstra's book is an honest "attempt to reconstruct the artist's initial intentions," on the premise that "painters and poets might have had an immediate formative influence on each other, that the structure and content of a writer's work might have been influenced quite directly by specific paintings, or a specific style of painting." Stieglitz, and several of his painter friends, were able to formulate their intentions vividly and usefully, and Dijkstra makes good use of this material. But Williams was not able, and although Dijkstra admits this, he still embarasses Williams with old snaps: "It is not what you say that matters but the manner in which you say it." Given the rhetoric to which the Williams who is Dijkstra's subject is committed, this is hopeless. It contradicts itself, and Williams; and it is not true.

César Graña[6] is loath to generalize, it being in his opinion a sociological and critical vice; and, indeed, he makes much of his virtues, his specifics. Yet it is only by relying on the systematic generalizations of experience provided by various intellectual and artistic traditions that he is able to write so well about "specific literary and artistic questions in relation to specific cultural episodes,

[6] FACT AND SYMBOL: ESSAYS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF ART AND LITERATURE, by *César Graña*. Oxford University Press. $7.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

situations, and traditions," and to forego the sociological generalizations which are his bane. The seven essays which constitute his book (with its abysmal title: *Fact and Symbol*) are each interesting, and several are very fine. It is ironic, however, that unlike his prototypical artist, for whom "a sense of intellectual foreclosure . . . is produced by the possibility of *solving* a specific problem," Graña, like every good scientist, and every good critic, is obsessed by the need to define the problem in terms of its contingent solution. The result is an ironic tension which pervades the book, its style, and its subject, and provides its most compelling charm. Veblen is misread (in the essay "Social Optimism and Literary Depression") because he has to be ("Veblen's singular and colourful generalities have brought upon him accusations of bogus and opportunitistic scholarship. The accusers humourlessly miss the point. Veblen must be read freely and beyond literal meaning, and his accounts must be understood above all as what we might call theoretical evocations aimed at uncovering the symbolic content of our social heritage"), but also because Graña has him at the specific center of a general cultural and artistic field of centrifugal forces. Baudelaire's Dandyism is illuminated in all its generality, because it provides a focus for a specific perspective on post-romantic art and life. For Graña is a good critic, and has a reasonably sure sense of the main chance. Picking out Georg Simmel's observation that "the human recognitions of the city, though swift and resourceful, are always tangential and uncommitted," he proceeds to develop a description of "French Impressionism as an Urban Art Form" which provides a supremely accurate presentiment of the "essential gaudiness" of poets such as Wallace Stevens, and poems such as "Sunday Morning." Along the way, Graña isolates once again the quality which is so characteristic of the age of which he writes, insisting as a sociologist what C. S. Lewis insisted as a critic, that what is on the surface is not necessarily superficial.

The next three essays ("The Private Lives of Public Museums: Can Art Be Democratic?," "Art and the American Republic," and "Is There a Democratic Architecture?") are amusing, one on Dewey ("John Dewey's Social Art and the Sociology of Art") is shrewd but slight, and the final piece ("Cultural Dreams and Historical Frustrations in Spanish American Literature"), though a bit contrived, and possibly written more than Graña realizes out of his own bafflement, is a useful study of what he calls "the search for identity (which) is really an act of conjuration, the effort to give life to a metaphor, a metaphor that rests on the imputation to whole people and nations of the self-consciousness, grievances, and demands of the metaphor makers, that is to say, the intellectuals." For Graña is his subject, one of the passionate proprietors of the social mind, and if a bit too interested in cultural property, still possessing a salutary critical intensity, and a rare compassion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROGER SALE

Enemies, Foreigners, and Friends[1]

LET IT ALL HANG OUT, yes, of course, but look what happens when you do. On p. 80 of Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Project for a Revolution in New York,* someone called "the fake policeman" says to a woman:

> We can get on with the preliminary questions right away, if you're ready. When you have nothing more to declare, your torture will begin, to see whether or not you have told the truth. Without changing your position nor tying you up any more than now, we can, for purely plastic reasons, send a little blood over these white buttocks of yours. Then, when we turn you over (chiefly, of course, to deal with the breasts and the vulva), it will be better to tie you securely to the ironing board.

On p. 151 we have someone called "I":

> I sprinkle gas on the horsehair which substitutes for pubic hair on the chained mannequin, I return the can of gasoline to its position. . . . I turn off the three spotlights, strike one of the matches, and quickly brush it over the gasoline soaked genitals, which immediately burst into flame.

The mannequin is then called "lovely Joan," and earlier the girl had told the fake policeman her name is Joan Robeson. Earlier still, a girl with auburn hair is bound and a man in a white coat comes in and tortures her. The same girl, or different girls. The same men, or different men. We know, and don't know, and only someone with a taste for this kind of fictional masturbation could care. It is the technique, finally, that is the titillation and the torturer, as it reduces everything human to the faceless and the pointless and then, carefully and meticulously, it maims it. Not an easy book to forgive.

On almost every score Philip Roth's *The Breast* is even worse. The dust jacket consists of one sentence: "The story of a man who turned into a female breast." And that's it, all of it. This 78 page "novel" is just stupefyingly bad; I read it through twice, surely more than Roth

[1] PROJECT FOR A REVOLUTION IN NEW YORK, by *Alain Robbe-Grillet.* Grove. $5.95. THE BREAST, by *Philip Roth.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, $4.95. THE OGRE, by *Michel Tournier.* Doubleday, $7.95. CHIMERA, by *John Barth.* Random House, $6.95. G, by *John Berger.* Viking, $7.95. THE MAN WHO GOT AWAY, by *Sumner Locke Elliott.* Harper & Row, $6.95. THE WESTERN COAST, by *Paula Fox.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $7.95. THE NEEDLE'S EYE, by *Margaret Drabble.* Knopf. $6.95. ENEMIES, A LOVE STORY, by *Isaac Bashevis Singer.* Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $6.95. SPRING SNOW, by *Yukio Mishima.* Knopf. $7.95. OPEN HEART, by *Frederick Buechner.* Atheneum. $5.95. ACTION, by *James Guetti.* Dial, $6.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

himself has done, just trying to fathom what could have made him write it. The best way to indicate its quality is to quote its very best moment:

"I would like to fuck you with my nipple, Miss Clark."

"I can't hear you, Mr. Kepesh."

"I get so excited I want to fuck you! I want you to sit on my nipple—with your cunt!"

Without taking so much as a second to consider her words (training will out), she said, "I'll be finished now in just a moment."

A bet? The desire to write the worst book he could? A deal to write a book by May 15 that hadn't been started the morning of the 14th? I can't imagine. It will, and should be, read, if at all, standing up in a bookstore.

I can only feel, reading Robbe-Grillet's and Roth's latest efforts, that these people are my enemies, that their very facility with words, which is all that lifts these books above the level of the simplest pornography, is what makes them hateful. We have three more free-wheeling, single-voiced, fabulist novels to consider, and still another that is closed circuited in a different way, but by comparison with the above, they are not enemies, only foreigners, writers who insist they have all they need inside their heads, writers indifferent or oblivious to anything that does not fit their pattern, create their truth. Robbe-Grillet and Roth are contemptuous of their readers, but that kind of contempt is finally indistinguishable from self-contempt. The arrogance of Michel Tournier, John Barth, John Berger, and, in a different way, Sumner Locke Elliott, is the real thing; they are contemptuous of their audience, if you like, because you have to go along with them totally or not at all. They are foreign because self-enclosed, but they also can fly.

Michel Tournier's *The Ogre* won the Prix Goncourt, and Janet Flanner says it is the best French book since Proust, but I suspect that must be because the French are relatively new to the contemporary fabulist game. *The Ogre* is very much like Andrew Sinclair's *Gog* and Alan Friedman's *Hermaphrodeity,* and those books won no prizes. The ogre's job, we guess early and learn at the end, is to be St. Christopher, the giant who helped Christ across a river. He gets this job at school, which is of course named St. Christopher's, where he is himself carried and tutored in life by a giant classmate named Nestor. He fulfills it when he carries a Jewish boy on his shoulders out of a German castle, past invading Russian soldiers, and right into a bog. In the same bog a body was found earlier, preserved for twenty centuries; who knows, says someone, but this man may have died the same day Christ did on the Cross. Who knows indeed. And three other of the ogre's young lads do end their lives fulfilling the scene at Calvary and the symbolism of the Teutonic Knights of the Cross, in whose

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

castle the last third of the book takes place. So it's all patterns, and life is simply knowing which one one is in, at least if one is an ogre, or an ogre's author.

The trouble is that Tournier's imagination is, though dense, programmatic and inflexible. The best sections in the book are lore about pigeons who are trained to save the French Army in the winter of 1940, about wild boars and stags in the game preserve of Hermann Goering, himself a bad ogre, and about the way a French POW gradually comes to gain considerable power in wartime East Prussia. But lore is not the same as patterns, so all this must be pushed into molds. Just when it begins to seem that Tournier's and his ogre's molds are nothing more than a passion for boys, excrement, raw meat, and open wounds, Tournier gives us the Jewish boy, who shows the ogre that all the patterns he has seen and created have their anti-patterns at Auschwitz. This, presumably, shows us that the Germans, though fascinating, are really awful. But to invert patterns is to do nothing at all, because all either can do is be fulfilled, and since the pattern-maker has known all along what they will reveal, a reader is left only the simple task of figuring them out. Once he does so, the novel itself just disappears.

Not so, roars, or giggles, John Barth. Those patterns *mean* something, and every storyteller knows that the secret to the treasure *is* the treasure, that "Open Sesame" is what delights, not what lies on the other side of the magic door. Weave a tale where the pattern surprises and you have everything, or at least, like Scheherazade, you stay alive. *Chimera* is three stories, one about Scheherezade's sister, one about Perseus, and a much longer one about Bellerephon, who wanted to be a mythic hero and who kept running into stories and patterns created before him by Perseus. He also runs into someone called John Barth, American fabulist, and Napoleon Bonaparte Bray, something like Barth's alter ego, who is working out all these patterns on a computer. As might be imagined, it is mostly a rather vulgar, low slung sort of enterprise:

> "Athene?" "Sorry." Anteia slipped back her hood and smiled. "Just checking to see if you're comfortable. Anything you need?" I thanked her, no. Couldn't sleep, she said, for thinking of my dinner tale. Spot of Metaxa? I groaned to get on with my dreamwork, but Queen was Queen. Neat? Bit of water in mine. "My husband's a coward," she said for openers; "No, not a coward, just minor league."

Thus, in the olden days, the tribulations of would-be mythic heroes. Given this, you can imagine what the sex is like.

But, and I speak as no fan of Barth's, I turned all the pages, and those of the first story, about Dunyazade, with real pleasure. Barth's idea is the simple one that once upon a time every one must have gone through what he is going through, and what he is going through is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being forty and discovering that women generally get the worst of the deal. So here are Scheherazade and Dunyazade, Medusa and Andromeda and Anteia and all the rest. This sort of intuition about mythology probably would find its best form in the dirty limerick, or the shaggy dog story, but Barth, leading American writer, isn't content with such, and so everything goes on longer than it should. But the length and the vulgarity alike are signs of Barth's engaging, beamish freedom, and near the end of the *Dunyazadiad* everything seems to go just as Barth had hoped it all would. Scheherazade's king found his wife unfaithful and so set out to slaughter all the virgins; his brother, Dunyazade's king, found his wife unfaithful and so seeks the tragic view of love. It's a long story, but it seems to come down to this:

> "Yes!" the King cried again, his eyes flashing. "Let's end the dark night! All that passion and hate between men and women; all that confusion of inequality and difference! Let's take the truly tragic view of love! Maybe it *is* a fiction, but it's the profoundest and best of all! Treasure me, Dunyazade, as I'll treasure you!"
>
> "For pity's sake stop!"
>
> But Shah Zaman urged ardently: "Let's embrace; let's forbear; let's love as long as we can, Dunyazade—then embrace again, forbear and love again!"
>
> "It won't work."
>
> "Nothing *works!* But the enterprise is noble; it's full of joy and life, and the other ways are deathy. Let's make love like passionate equals!"
>
> "You mean *as if* we were equals," Dunyazade said. "You know we're not. What you want is impossible."
>
> "Despite your heart's feelings?" pressed the King. "Let it be *as if!* Let's make a philosophy of that *as if!*"

Chauvinistic, surely, but in a piquant, charming way, much more relaxed than any Barth I know. Tell him he should be writing dirty limericks and the Barth of *Chimera* wouldn't mind. God knows his adorers would, God knows one is going to have to face students who now know the real truth about Perseus, but that's not his fault. *Chimera* is the best thing he's done since some early scenes in *The End of the Road.*

John Berger also uses his imagination to level history, to make the past answer to his present urgencies. He's much more serious about it than Barth, and when he dedicates *G,* a book about Don Juan, to the cause of women's liberation, it's no joke. As a meditation about history *G* is often interesting enough to keep one from minding that it is no novel, that nothing alien to the meditation can be tolerated. The idea is this: the European woman of the nineteenth century had to be two people, a person and a person watching herself. Being

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

property, she developed a surveyor within herself to see how the property was looking and acting. Don Juan, then, is the lover who seeks no property, only the self that is, who loves her not for her golden hair alone. He claims only the right to make love to the woman she really is, and since the longer he stays the more both are liable to treat her as property, he must come and go, travel, a stranger. Berger is an intelligent man, and he can both state his idea with some force and give it the kind of setting it needs to be suggestive. His English countryside, his Trieste, his English and Boers in South Africa, are vivid and neat; his sense of property and empire is handsomely fitted to his sense of the relations between men and women. It is a book easily compared to John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* and *G* is better in every respect.

But the fact that this is so, that Berger's idea is also more interesting than what animates Tournier's or Barth's imagination, really only serves to show how this kind of book tends toward self-defeat. The more interesting an idea is the more it should be tested in the fiction, the more its suggestiveness should be forced to compete and survive in a world where it is not all that lives. Berger has, for instance, a perfectly sensible little essay which shows why almost all writing about sex is false, and he then proceeds to write about sex, for the most part falsely, because he seems not to want to admit that the only good writing about sex is not "about sex" at all but about lives that are not simply sexual. Those lives are not Berger's present concern, but they also implicitly repudiate his meditation. The more insistent and thus foreign Berger is, the more he makes us wish he'd written a different book. He hasn't John Barth's entertaining gaminess, but he doesn't need that. He needs to be less solemn, and more serious.

Finally, just to show that meditations and mythic patterns aren't the only form the closed circuit novel can take, we have Sumner Locke Elliott's *The Man Who Got Away*. It reads like a novel because it is about someone who is imagined for his own sake, but one hasn't read far before the setness, the fittedness, of the scheme begins to dominate it. A man suddenly leaves home, leaves his life, as it were, and Elliott then takes us step-by-step into the man's past to show us why. The trouble is that we soon realize that each step has been tailored to get us closer to The Truth, that each must be a little bit more revealing than the one before, that no, it's not his second marriage or even his first or his adolescent affair with another boy that is crucial, which of course means, as we know long before Elliott tells us, mixup and trauma about childhood and parentage. The psychology is simple and dominating, and it reduces all details to a matter of Elliott's cleverness in handling them. He is clever, no question, but only that.

It is not for nothing that the best fantasies, the best raconteur tales, the best mythic projections, the best meditations, the best psychological horror stories, written in the past, before these things became fit

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forms for the novel, are all quite short. The Wife of Bath, Pascal, LaRochefoucauld, the Appointment in Samarra story, the dirty limerick, Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* the Greek Myths—all these are tiny in scale compared to the average novel. As a form the novel has always justified its great bulk by repudiating fantasy, mythic projection, and the like, in the name of slow and careful consideration of individual lives. The forms change all the time, but the emphasis does not. For that reason, all the books considered thus far, no matter how entertaining or suggestive, must yield to those by Paula Fox, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Frederic Buechner, Yukio Mishima, Margaret Drabble, and James Guetti. Six books, and not a great one in the bunch, but each is very much worth reading, for the care they take with the people they imagine. They neither take nor make life easy, but they make it seem worthwhile, and in reading them one thus can feel one has left the foreign countries and come home. To friends? Yes, friends again.

Paula Fox has set herself an almost impossible task, and her failure to handle it successfully thus is almost a badge of honor. Annie Gianfala, the heroine of *The Western Coast,* is a girl with no sense of herself or what she might be. It isn't hard to write about such people if you believe that knowing why something happens is all there is to experience, but Paula Fox cares too much about Annie to let explanations satisfy her. The setting is southern California, the period is just before World War II, Annie has drifted west from New York. Having no hold on herself she lets a bewildering array of people move in and out of her life more or less as they please: Communists and fellow travelers, movie types, queers and waitresses and blacks and bigots and suicides, all gravitated to this world of drifters. Paula Fox builds this world with painful clarity, person by person, pointless incident by pointless incident. Each character sees in Annie's blankness a chance to see her as they want to see her, and Annie slides in and out, rejecting only those with intolerable definitions of her. There must be almost a hundred characters here, and each is so clearly realized that you don't have to jiggle your memory to recognize one after he returns from a long absence. The trouble is that Paula Fox doesn't know what makes Annie grow. She does, at the end, give us an Annie who is much more capable and directed than she was, much less vague and frightened, but the book commits itself to making this a slow process and what we get, really, is only the beginning and the final Annie. The Annie of p. 276 is essentially the Annie of p. 1; the Annie of p. 277, after a convenient lapse of four years, is someone else. But even if this is true and the book cannot be called a success, *The Western Coast* is really there, shattered, dense, painful.

That is what one wants to say about Margaret Drabble's *The Needle's Eye* as well, except that Miss Drabble is so brilliant that she can make Paula Fox's greatest virtue, her honest doggedness, seem

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like plodding. Which is unfair, because what Paula Fox is trying to do is precisely what Miss Drabble should be trying to do and isn't. *The Needle's Eye* is her sixth and best novel, and it is good enough to give Margaret Drabble claim to being the best young novelist in the world. One need get no further than the second paragraph to see that:

> There was only one woman in front of him in the off-license, and she was certainly in no hurry either. She had not even got round to asking for anything yet, because she was too busy telling the man behind the counter about her granddaughter. Two weeks old, this child was, and the lady had just finished knitting her a pram-cover in stripes of white and blue; it didn't matter that it was blue and not pink, the daughter had said, she didn't like pink anyway. The man behind the counter was interested in the story; not merely polite, but interested. One can tell the difference. The woman was short and broad and she was wearing bedroom slippers. What raffish districts of London his friends inhabited: NW1 this was, with all its smart contrasts. They depressed him unbearably, the well-arranged gulfs and divisions of life, the frivolity with which his friends took these contrasts, the pleasure they took in such abrasions. It appalled him, the complacency with which such friends would describe the advantages of living in a mixed area. As though they licensed seedy old ladies and black men to walk their streets, teaching their children of poverty and despair, as their pet hamsters and guinea pigs taught them of sex and death.

One settles in, grateful that there are 370 more pages, regretful that all novels can't be like this one. The details exist here, first, for their own sake, then for the sake of what a character can make of them, last for what we can make of the character. It takes a loving and intelligent author to do this, someone who herself loves to think and who knows what circumstances give rise to what thoughts.

Given this, it is rather a shock to realize later on that the person wonderfully created on this opening page is mostly a bore. It feels strange to say that after six novels Margaret Drabble has yet to create a male character successfully. It is a shock because page-by-page almost everything is interesting, and our sense of Margaret Drabble's limitations comes to us only later on. The book is chock full of good things. When someone is remembering something—a chance meeting last week, a face from the far past, an item in a book that can't be placed in time—or when someone is trying to make life add up—why must life's promises all fade, how else to live with riches but to denounce them, when did this marriage reach its wrong turning point—no one is better, no one more compelling about the relation of the stuff of life to what we make of it. Yet the hero is dull, the ostensible villain is unreal, the dialogue is stiff, the story is trumped up, and that's a puzzlement. All one can say about Simon Camish,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

working class boy made wealthy barrister by his mother's push and his wife's money, Simon, whose insistent sourness never changes from his being appalled when his friends live in mixed areas, Simon, who does something he calls "love" Rose Vassilou—all one can do is repeat James's phrase about Frederic Moreau—Why, why *him*? I'd much rather read Margaret Drabble than Flaubert, but that makes her insipid characters all the harder to accept. My guess is that Miss Drabble became so absorbed in her heroine that she just forgot to see what else she had on her hands. And Rose is wonderful—her need to renounce, her acceptance and even delight in the domestic squalor she prefers to riches, *her* deep absorption in life—all this is luminous and, at moments, grand. Despite all that's wrong with *The Needle's Eye,* it shows its author on the verge of being a major writer.

Such hope is no longer possible or necessary for Isaac Bashevis Singer. If his great work, *The Manor,* is behind him, so be it; he still can do much, and in *Enemies, A Love Story,* he has composed a fine labor of love. He says, in a note, that "although I did not have the privilege of going through the Hitler holocaust, I have lived for years in New York with refugees from this ordeal." The book is for and about a few of those who survived, who found themselves in America after the war, gasping for breath like beached fish, wondering why it was they who were left alive. The story is *Comedy of Errors* stuff: a man has married the Polish peasant who kept him alive while he hid in a hayloft for three years; he then also marries his mistress; he then discovers that his first wife, whom he had thought killed by the Germans, had escaped to Russia and is now in New York. For each wife he has a somewhat different story about how he lives and what has happened, and so there are scenes where he is expected to appear at a party with Wife #2 and he shows up with Wife #3. Of course there is comedy, but Singer just lets that happen, as the inevitable fallout from such a plot, and concentrates instead on showing how the man and his wives fall into this because they can no longer do more than clumsily make life up as they go along. When any of the four looks at one of the others, he or she can easily find an enemy, in the man who is using all three, in the women who are taking him away. So Masha storms and Tamara scolds and Yadwiga complains and Herman never knows what to do—the enemies are there, but the real enemy is elsewhere, in the past. In a way they are all too ghostly to sustain a major fiction, they are all too tightly governed by Singer's notion of their and Jewish history. But it is wonderfully written, low-keyed and compassionate, so that one weeps as much for the little things that could make them sad, the lies and the futility of their efforts, as for the huge thing that brought them to this pass.

Next, two novels that are, or seem to be, parts of a larger series, both by writers who have successfully repudiated the pegging of them that most people did in the past. When Yuko Mishima committed ritual suicide two years ago, it seemed necessary to think that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fanatic in Mishima had killed the novelist in him, so when it was announced that Mishima had given his publisher his "masterpiece" just before he died, a four-volume history of Japan in this century, one had to fear the worst. But whatever else, the first of the four, *Spring Snow,* shows no signs of the programmatic or dogmatic. It is a slow, loving, period piece, set in aristocratic Japan in the decade after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. One looks suspiciously for all things Western that Mishima must hate, but here are telephones for traditional go-betweens to use, a five-reel movie of a Dickens novel used as part of the entertainment of an Imperial guest, cars to use when carriages and rickshaws aren't fast enough, and a splendid baron who rightly figures out that the way to act like an English gentleman is to mutter inanities that others can't quite hear. As with Singer, Mishima lets his comedy take care of itself while he concentrates on getting his details just right. The age of the samurai is almost over, and the hero can do little more than love a woman, or an image of a woman, that he must make sure he can't have. It is Mishima's intuition that that is what the old things have dwindled down to, but he also insists that the hero cannot therefore be taken lightly, and he does this by employing his characteristic eroticism, his caressing of the texture of flesh, cloth, flowers, and dreams, as a way to make his details clear and un-nostalgic. It does move awfully slowly, and one suspects it does so in part because Mishima had equated a masterpiece with a work of great length. But *Spring Snow* is more than enough to show us that Mishima was not dead when he died, and that we may indeed be watching the unfolding of a truly major work.

That is probably much more than can be claimed for Frederick Buechner, but his case is, on the whole, as strange and interesting as Mishima's. In the fifties Buechner published three stiflingly well-written novels. In 1958 he was ordained a minister of the Presbyterian Church, became chaplain at Andover, and that, by all rights, should have been that. But while it is true that a recent *Reader's Digest* contains a little Buechner piece on the Bible as a book nobody knows, it is also true that he left Andover in 1967 and since then has opened up as a real novelist. The latest, *Open Heart,* is a sequel to *Lion Country* of last year, and it looks as though, like *2 Henry IV,* this sequel wasn't planned until the first book was over. Buechner also seems to have found, in Leo Bebb, the evangelical minister who has churches with names like Holy Love and Open Heart, a Falstaff, a character too good to quit on after only one novel. Here is Bebb, talking to his narrator son-in-law about an Indian who just died:

> "Out there somewhere now Herman Redpath and his Maker are sweating like niggers. You ever seen anything getting born looked easy, Antonio, let alone anything getting born again?"
>
> From behind Bebb had no neck to speak of, just a coil of fat above his collar. He looked diminished against the huge sky.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I said, "At least it's nice you believe there's something left of Herman Redpath to sweat with."

"Listen," Bebb said. "That's not even one half of what I believe."

"What else do you believe?" I said.

"Antonio, I believe everything."

It was the second time that I'd heard him make a remark of such classic grandeur. The first was a remark he'd made the first day I'd ever set eyes on him. We had said goodbye, and he had started walking down the subway stairs when he turned to add one last word. "Everything is lawful to me," he said, quoting Scripture. It was the Parthenon itself. And now this. "I believe everything," he said. Everything. . . .

"You make it sound almost easy," I said finally.

"Don't kid yourself," Bebb said, turning slowly to where he could look at me. "It's hard as hell."

There are places where Bebb is funnier, where it all is very much like the zanier Wright Morris, but the important point is the way the comedy is based on the scorn and the amazement that Antonio, and we, must feel about Bebb's impenetrability.

In *Open Heart* Antonio is a much more crucial figure than he was in *Lion Country,* and his believing scepticism is wonderfully played off against both Bebb and Bebb's daughter, Sharon, who does Yoga and Evelyn Wood and who sleeps with Antonio's nephew and who lights up every page she is in because when you're Leo Bebb's daughter you have to find ways to stay alive, or out from under. If you don't you end up like Bebb's wife, drinking Tropicana laced with gin all day long. What makes it all succeed is Buechner's deft placing of all these characters, keeping them funny or impossible when seen from a distance, then making them briefly very moving when suddenly seen from close up. Near the end one sees Buechner fumbling, probably because he wants to leave room for still another sequel if he finds one, and the inconclusiveness of the last fifty pages highlights Buechner's tendency to just go on letting his characters go and then reining them in because he is not sure what else to do with them, what final story is theirs. So there should be a book to follow this one, where we do come out somewhere. In the meantime it must be made clear that Buechner is not just a man who writes well but one with something to write well about.

Perhaps James Guetti will never be a novelist of the stature of Margaret Drabble or Frederick Buechner, but nonetheless, in his first novel, *Action,* he has done something they never have done as well. He has seen a way to make his story move, right through to the end, without allowing one arbitrary turn to the tale or one neatening idea to make it all fit. The point needs insisting on, because Guetti's book may never get the audience it should have, and the originality

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the achievement will probably go unmarked. The trouble, if you want to call it that, is that *Action* is about gambling and a gambler, and lots of readers will take a peek at the first few pages, which detail the hero, Phil Hatcher, going through the past performances of a horse he likes, and will simply feel it's too much for them. But their despair is precisely the mark of Guetti's excellence.

Most novels about gambling, like most novels about anything which involves a special language and ritual, make the fatal mistake of turning the reader into a tourist, and the subject into a matter of color and lore and specialness. In the terms of this review, they are written by foreigners. The opposite mistake is made by Dostoyevsky in *The Gambler,* which is one of his best things; he treats gambling not as something special but as just another Dostoyevskian sickness or compulsion. Guetti's novel is about gambling, so we get a good deal of the lore of horse racing, poker, and dice, and while Guetti is willing to be helpful about some details most people usually don't get, he refuses to be a tourist guide, because to do that would be to take the focus off his hero, and he can't do that because this is also a book about one particular gambler. He needs the lore and the rituals because they are part of the air Phil Hatcher breathes, but he needs Phil Hatcher too, because he has a real story to tell about him.

Early in *Action* is a Dostoyevskian sequence in a casino in the Bahamas where Hatcher and his wife have gone to celebrate an unlooked-for inheritance. Phil becomes totally absorbed in the dice tables, unable to swim or lie in the sun or enjoy a meal, and his wife becomes frightened because this is gambling pure and terrible, with none of the side attractions of race tracks or poker games. If this were Dostoyevsky's novel Hatcher would plunge deeper and deeper and eventually become derelict. But no, Hatcher is hooked but not stupid or a character in a morality play. He goes home, plays no more dice, learns his poker better, plays the horses carefully. Still he goes on losing, though, and takes to finding shady ways to beat bookies and to win in a no limit poker game. He is plunging, simultaneously into the maelstrom of the loser and into learning how to gamble and thereby to purify and achieve his life. He quits his job, his wife leaves him, he is excluded from the no limit poker game because he is now a pro, but he has his horses and his small poker games:

> The schedule was established. There was always the call to the bookie around noon—Leon had not failed to pay yet—and then an excursion to one race track or another. There was some kind of poker every night if he wanted it. Then, though his room was bare and suitable for sleeping, he would have trouble. When he had won that day, he would be yet excited, concentrating, imagining good races or hands for the next day. Then he did not sleep but did not mind, no more than he minded the waiting through parts of the days before and after winners. But losing caused him to reflect. Even

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> though the same, faint neon glare filtered through the same single window, though the buses and the papers and the games and the races and all his life surrounded him, he would be staring, and feel the slight swaying of the bedsprings. He might wonder then what he was doing, and remember his wife with the distant affection one might have for a daughter gone off suddenly to her own life. Yet when he speculated for long upon that life, his vague jealously would dissolve into a vision of what he himself no longer had to do.

Drink and be whole again, beyond confusion, says Frost at the end of "Directive," and as we drink we cannot tell if we are, thus whole, saved or annihilated. So too here. Hatcher is free, with the life he wants and needs, and he may well also be close to dead. Guetti has given us enough of the point and excitement to being a gambler so we cannot scorn Hatcher's fate, but it is frightening nonetheless.

At the very end Hatcher is about to go to Florida for the winter racing. He buys a car with his wife, who has asked for a divorce, and he asks her to go with him instead, because now, he says, he has the life he always wanted. She tells him first, no, she doesn't want him to sign the divorce papers and then, no, she won't go with him. It is a way of praising *Action* to say that it is a book from which one wants to quote the last page:

> Hatcher looked at her confused. "What can I say?"
> "Well," Margaret said, "You can say, 'Wish me luck!' "
> He still could not understand it or believe it, and he propped his chin in his hand and looked at her. She took a step backward, and then another. "Good-bye," she said. "Good luck, Phil. Write me about the winners."

It is all right there, in her final sentence, the fate of both of them, her wanting to hear only about winners, her knowing he will only want to tell her about winners, both knowing how whining losers are, both winners and losers now. Guetti takes us right through to the end, to a point beyond which we know that further definition is not possible, or must wait for another novel.

Looking back, we can see that yes, it is a thin book. Margaret Hatcher is only A Wife, and there's no one else in the book, except Phil and his story, and in the very purity of the story there is a certain iciness, Guetti's indifference to the parts of life that are not gambling. So it is not a friendly novel, but Guetti is, still, the best of friends, because he makes us feel baffled by life even as we honor it, makes us feel the two together in ways that force us to seek to resolve the puzzlement and the celebration in weeping made exhilarated because we cry for someone other than ourselves.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COLLECTED POEMS of JOHN WHEELWRIGHT

A complete edition of Wheelwright's poetry including *Rock & Shell* (1930), *Mirrors of Venus* (1938), and *Political Self-Portrait* (1940) as well as the previously unpublished collection *Dusk to Dusk* and miscellaneous "Additional Poems." Preface by the editor, Alvin H. Rosenfeld, memorial poem by Robert Fitzgerald, and an introductory essay by Austin Warren. $12.50

Some Comments on Wheelwright (1897-1940) and His Work

JOHN ASHBERY: "I have long felt that John Wheelwright was one of the greatest modern American poets. The long-awaited publication of his *Collected Poems* may well have consequences for American poetry similar to those which the discovery of Charles Ives had for our music."

HAROLD BLOOM: "The *Collected Poems* of John Wheelwright, beautifully edited and nobly produced, gives us at last the work of a wonderful and unique American poet. . . ."

MALCOLM COWLEY: "I wish Jack were here to gloat over it. He is indeed the best of our undiscovered poets after Trumbull Stickney, and I hope this book will make his name and work familiar to many."

JOHN HOLLANDER: "John Wheelwright was an astonishing poet. . . . This volume restores a missing chapter to the history of our poetry. I have awaited it for a very long time."

HOWARD NEMEROV: "It's a book long overdue, but now it is finally here, what a fine book it is! And how good, too, to have the stubborn and living integrity of his voice among us once again; we need it."

NORMAN HOLMES PEARSON: "His *Collected Poems* are worth collecting; they are no heirlooms of sensibility."

KENNETH REXROTH: "Jack Wheelwright was one of the very best poets of his time and it is a literary event of the first order. . . ."

M. L. ROSENTHAL: "Robert Fitzgerald's beautiful, accurate introductory poem suggests perfectly the unique intelligence, integrity, and force of character that make Wheelwright a continuing presence."

RICHARD WILBUR: "For too many readers of poetry John Wheelwright has existed only as a persistent rumor of past vitality, wit, and distinction; New Directions is to be thanked for bestowing, upon the witless present, this impeccable collected edition."

published by

NEW DIRECTIONS

333 Sixth Avenue, New York 10014

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AUTHORS

Andrade, Carlos Drummond de: To a Hotel Scheduled for Demolition, tr. Thomas Colchie (*poem*) 186
Bennett, Joseph: The Tomb of the Diver 543
Bergonzi, Bernard: Letters from England 171, 521
Berry, Wendell: The Strangers; Leaving Home (*poems*) 260
Chamberlin, J. E.: Oscar Wilde and the Importance of Doing Nothing 194
The Arias That Spiritual Fiddlings Make (*review*) 693
Chaves, Jonathan: Translations from Yang Wan-li (*poems*) 403
Cruttwell, Patrick: Must We Burn the Literary Critics? (*review*) 323
"Private Faces in Public Places" (*review*) 469
Davenport, Guy: Robot (*story*) 413
Degnan, James P.: Fiction Chronicle (*review*) 330
Dickey, William: Public and Private Poetry (*review*) 295
Farber, Stephen: The Old Ultra-Violence 287
Outlaws and Snobs 647
Fussell, B. H.: Waiting for Tutankhamen: London Theatre 626
Ghose, Zulfikar: Ghalib (*review*) .. 309
Haggin, B. H.: Music and Ballet Chronicles 101, 275, 451
Hass, Robert: Concerning the Afterlife the Indians of Central California Had Only the Dimmest Notion; The Pornographer; The Pornographer, Melancholy; The Pornographer at the End of Winter; Politics of a Pornographer (*poems*) 239
Hobdell, Roger: Frontiers of Summer (Part Two) (*poem*) 78
Hobsbaum, Philip: Calvinism in Action: The Super-Ego Triumphant 23
The Temptation of Giant Despair 597
Holloway, John: A Mirror (*poem*) 81
Huang, Po Fei: Count One; Elegy in November; The Winter Solstice; Words; Anxiety; June Day; In the Woods (*poems*) 243
Klein, Kevin: Harlem: November, 1971; When Learning is an Emergency; Labor Poem; Following the Lone Star (*poems*) 447
Lattimore, Richmond: The Purity of Poetry (*review*) 135
Poetry Chronicle (*review*) 475
Levine, Philip: Late Moon; War (*poems*) 593
Mandelstam, Osip: Four Poems, tr. W. S. Merwin and Clarence Brown 71
Merrill, James: Days of 1935 (*poem*) 13
Merwin, W. S.: Summits; Dogs (*poems*) 262
Millard, Charles W.: Mondrian ... 270
Brancusi and the Neo-Classical Tradition 654
Morgan, Frederick: Joseph Bennett, 1922-1972 183
Poems from *A Book of Change* .. 361
Morley, Hilda: Five Poems 74
Mudrick, Marvin: Fiction and Truth (*review*) 142
Here They Are (*review*) 338
Can You Forgive Him? (*review*) .. 487
Saint-Simon's Kingdom (*review*) .. 675
Paz, Octavio: Return, tr. Eliot Weinberger (*poem*) 9
Pevear, Richard: Notes on the Cantos of Ezra Pound 51
Sinyavsky in Two Worlds 375
The Killing of Orpheus; Mnemosyne; Little Acmeist Elegy; Waiting (*poems*) 568
Pritchard, William H.: Youngsters, Middlesters, and Some Old Boys (*review*) 119
Paradise Lost (*review*) 320
Those Who Can't (*review*) 685
Sale, Roger: L. Frank Baum, and Oz 571
Enemies, Foreigners, and Friends (*review*) 703
Sandy, Stephen: Northway Tanka; Spider (*poems*) 539
Shapiro, Harvey: In the Room; For the Sparrows on New Year's Morning; "Jesus, Mary I Love You Save Souls; City Portrait; Every Day; Easy (*poems*) 613

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Siegel, Marcia B.: The Candid Art of Time 461
Simon, John: Theatre Chronicle .. 83
The Aesthetics of the Actor's Appearance 247
That Championship Season 616
Spacks, Patricia Meyer: A Chronicle of Women (*review*) 157
Fiction Chronicle (*review*) 497
Stafford, William: In the White Sky; Sleeping on the Sisters Land; Friend; Weeds; The Escape (*poems*) 219
Tomlinson, Charles: Rower; Le Rendez-vous des Paysages; La Promenade de Protée; Hawks (*poems*) 222
Van Doren, Mark: The Garden of My Own Mind; And All the While; The Possessed (*poems*) .. 184
Vliet, R. G.: The Third Window (*story*) 225
Weales, Gerald: The Year of the Hopper 111
Young, Vernon: Film: Natural and Unnatural History 93
Hands Across the Sea 263
The Emperor's New Prose (*review*) 513
Nature and Vision: or Dubious Antithesis (*review*) 659
Youngren, William H.: Better Than Tovey? (*review*) 633

BOOKS REVIEWED

The Abduction, by Maxine Kumin: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Absences, by James Tate: *Vernon Young* 659
An Accidental Man, by Iris Murdoch: *James P. Degnan* 330
Action, by James Guetti: *Roger Sale* 703
Adventures of the Letter I, by Louis Simpson: *Richmond Lattimore* .. 475
After Images, by Shinkichi Takahashi, tr. by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto: *William Dickey* 295
Akenfield, by Ronald Blythe: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
Albergo Empedocle and Other Writings, by E. M. Forster: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
Altars, by Clayton Eshleman: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Amazing Grace, by Anita Bryant: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
The Aeneid of Virgil, tr. by Allen Mandelbaum: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
Anthony Trollope, by James Pope Hennessy: *Marvin Mudrick* 487
The Art of Ecstasy: Teresa, Bernini, and Crashaw, by Robert T. Petersson: *J. E. Chamberlin* 693
The Baby Trap, by Ellen Peck: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
The Bell Jar, by Sylvia Plath: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Birds of America, by Mary McCarthy: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* .. 157
The Black Poets, ed. by Dudley Randall: *William Dickey* 295
The Book of Flights, by J. M. G. Le Clezio: *James P. Degnan* 330
Books Do Furnish a Room, by Anthony Powell: *Marvin Mudrick* .. 142
The Breast, by Philip Roth: *Roger Sale* 703
The Bride Wore the Traditional Gold, by Talbot Spivack: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Carrington: Letters and Extracts from Her Diaries, ed. by David Garnett: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* .. 157
Children, You Are Very Little, by Betsy Drake Grant: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Chimera, by John Barth: *Roger Sale* 703
Christmas in Las Vegas, by Robert Watson: *William H. Pritchard* .. 119
Cities of Light and Songs of the Morning, by Martin Green: *William H. Pritchard* 685
Classic Black African Poems, ed. by Willard Trask: *William Dickey* .. 295
The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, by Charles Rosen: *William H. Youngren* 633
The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara, ed. by Donald Allen: *Wil-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

liam Dickey 295
Collected Poems, by John Betjeman: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Collected Poems 1958-1970, by George MacBeth: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
The Collected Poems of Phelps Putnam, ed. by Charles Walker; *William H. Pritchard* 119
The Collected Works of Paul Valéry, Vol. I, Poems, tr. by David Paul; On Poets and Poetry, tr. by James R. Lawler; ed. by Jackson Mathews: *Richmond Lattimore* 135
Colonel Mint, by Paul West: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Concurring Beasts, by Stephen Dobyns: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
Crossing the Water, by Sylvia Plath: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Crying in the Cheap Seats, by Bill Tremblay: *William H. Pritchard* 119
A Dance to the Music of Time: Third Movement (The Valley of Bones, The Soldier's Art, The Military Philosophers), by Anthony Powell: *Marvin Mudrick* .. 142
Daughters of the Moon, by Joan Haggerty: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* . 157
The Dead of the House, by Hannah Green: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Delusions, Etc., by John Berryman: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
Digging for Indians, by Gary Gildner: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Doctor Brodie's Report, by Jorge Luis Borges: *James P. Degnan* .. 330
Edward Hopper, by Lloyd Goodrich: *Gerald Weales* 111
Edward Hopper, Selections from the Hopper Bequest, by Lloyd Goodrich: *Gerald Weales* 111
Eecchhooeess, by N. H. Pritchard: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Eliot and His Age, by Russell Kirk: *William H. Pritchard* 316
Emergency Poems, by Nicanor Parra: *Vernon Young* 659
Enchantment, by Linda Grace Hoyer: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Encounters, by Daniel Berrigan: *William Dickey* 295
End Zone, by Don DeLillo: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Enemies, A Love Story, by Isaac Bashevis Singer: *Roger Sale* 703
Enough of Dying, ed. by Kay Boyle and Justine Van Grundy: *William Dickey* 295
Epistle to a Godson, by W. H. Auden: *Vernon Young* 659
Ernest Hemingway and the Arts, by E. S. Watts: *J. E. Chamberlin* ... 693
Expensive People, by Joyce Carol Oates: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
Fact and Symbol: Essays in the Sociology of Art and Literature, by César Graña: *J. E. Chamberlin* .. 693
Falling Off, by Kathleen Norris: *William H. Pritchard* 119
The Female Eunuch, by Germaine Greer: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Fifty Years of Russian Prose, From Pasternak to Solzhenitsyn, ed. by Krystyna Pomorska: *Vernon Young* 513
Forever Flowing, by Vasily Grossman: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
French Poetry Today, A Bilingual Anthology, ed. by Simon Watson Taylor and Edward Lucie-Smith: *Vernon Young* 659
G, by John Berger: *Roger Sale* 703
A Garden of Earthly Delights, by Joyce Carol Oates: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
The Generous Days, by Stephen Spender: *William H. Pritchard* .. 119
The German Lesson, by Siegried Lenz: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Ghalib 1797-1869, Vol. I: Life and Letters, tr. and ed. by Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam: *Zulfikar Ghose* 309
The Ghazals of Ghalib, ed. by Aijaz Ahmad: *Zulfikar Ghose* 309
The Gift Horse, by Hildegard Knef: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Girl, 20, by Kingsley Amis: *James P. Degnan* 330
The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick, by Peter Handke: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Growing Up Female in America: Ten Lives, ed. by Eve Merriam: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
The Hand That Cradles the Rock, by Rita Mae Brown: *William H. Pritchard* 119
The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech, by Bram Dijkstra: *J. E. Chamberlin* 693
Hints to Pilgrims, by James Tate:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

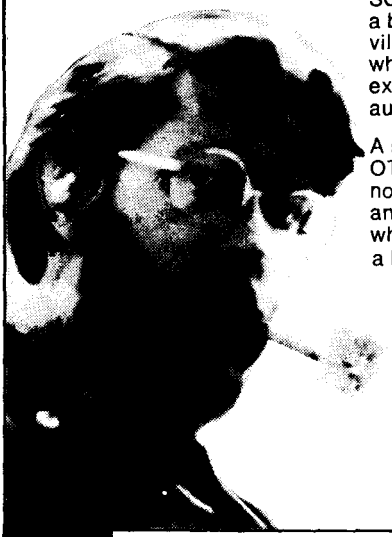
William H. Pritchard 119
Historical Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon, ed. and tr. by Lucy Norton. Vols. I (1691-1709); II (1710-1715), and III (1715-1723): *Marvin Mudrick* 675
Imagination and Power, by Thomas R. Edwards: *Patrick Cruttwell* .. 469
The Irrelevant English Teacher, by J. Mitchell Morse: *William H. Pritchard* 685
Kachina, by John Perlman: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Les Guérillères, by Monique Wittig: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
The Liberated Woman and Other Americans, by Midge Decter: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Literature and Art in the Middle Ages, by F. P. Pickering: *J. E. Chamberlin*. 693
Living In It, by C. G. Hanzlicek: *William Dickey* 295
The Lizards, by Alessandra Lavagnino: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* .. 497
Mad in Pursuit, by Violette Leduc: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Magog, by Andrew Sinclair: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
The Malcontents, by C. P. Snow: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
The Man Who Got Away, by Sumner Locke Elliott: *Roger Sale* ... 703
Man's World, Woman's Place: A Study in Social Mythology, by Elizabeth Janeway: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Maurice, by E. M. Forster: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen, by Alix Kates Shulman: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Midnight Was My Cry, by Carolyn Kizer: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Mnemosyne: The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts, by Mario Praz: *J. E. Chamberlin* .. 693
The Motorcycle Betrayal Poems, by Diane Wakoski: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Mrs. Palfrey at the Claremont, by Elizabeth Taylor: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Muriel, by George P. Elliott: *James P. Degnan* 330
My Way of Life, by Joan Crawford: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Myself Among Others, by Ruth Gordon: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* .. 157
Natural Disasters, by Terry Stokes: *William H. Pritchard* 119
The Needle's Eye, by Margaret Drabble: *Roger Sale* 703
Not To Disturb, by Muriel Spark: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Obscenities, by Michael Casey: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
The Ogre, by Michel Tournier: *Roger Sale* 703
Once for the Last Bandit, by Samuel Hazo: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
One Hand Clapping, by Anthony Burgess: *James P. Degnan* 330
Open Heart, by Frederick Buechner: *Roger Sale* 703
The Optimist's Daughter, by Eudora Welty: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* ... 497
The Ordeal of Stanley Stanhope, by Richard Bousquet: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Our Gang, by Philip Roth: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
Out of My Time, by Marya Mannes: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
The Poems of Dylan Thomas, ed. by Daniel Jones: *William H. Pritchard* 119
The Poems of Mao Tse-Tung, tr. by Willis Barnstone with Ko Ching-Po: *Richmond Lattimore* . 475
Poems 1968-1970, by Robert Graves: *William H. Pritchard* 119
The Poems of Propertius, tr. by John Warden: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
The Politics of Literature: Dissenting Essays on the Teaching of English, ed. by Louis Kampf and Paul Lauter: *William H. Pritchard* 685
Poor Cousins, by Ande Manners: *Marvin Mudrick* 338
Portal to America: The Lower East Side 1870-1925, ed. by Allon Schoener: *Marvin Mudrick* 338
The Pound Era, by Hugh Kenner: *William H. Pritchard* 316
Project for a Revolution in New York, by Alain Robbe-Grillet: *Roger Sale* 703
The Proselytizer, by D. Keith Mano: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Purr, Baby, Purr, by Lucianne Gold-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

berg and Jeannine Sakol: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Pushkin Threefold, tr. and intro. by Walter Arndt: *Vernon Young* ... 659
Queenie, by Hortense Calisher: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Rabbit Redux, by John Updike: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
The Savage God, by A. Alvarez: *Philip Hobsbaum* 597
The Sea Change of Angela Lewes, by Cynthia Propper Seton: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Selected Poems, by Gunnar Ekelöf, tr. by W. H. Auden and Leif Sjöberg: *Vernon Young* 659
Selected Poems, by Lars Gustafsson, tr. by Robin Fulton: *Vernon Young* 659
Selected Poems 1923-1967, by Jorge Luis Borges, ed. by Norman Thomas Di Giovanni: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
Selected Poems, by Pablo Neruda, ed. by Nathaniel Tarn: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
Shagbark, by John Peck: *Vernon Young* 659
Sleek for the Long Flight, by William Matthews: *Vernon Young* .. 659
Smudging, by Diane Wakoski: *Vernon Young* 659
Something Else, by Jonathan Bishop: *William H. Pritchard* 685
Song of a Prisoner, by Okot p'Bitek: *William Dickey* 295
Spacewalks, by Burgert Roberts; *William H. Pritchard* 119
The Spirit of the Ghetto, by Hutchins Hapgood: *Marvin Mudrick* .. 338
Spring Snow, by Yukio Mishima: *Roger Sale* 703
Squandering, by Dorothy Monet: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Summer Situations, by Ann Birstein: *James P. Degnan* 330
T. S. Eliot: A Memoir, by Robert Sencourt: *William H. Pritchard* .. 119
T. S. Eliot: The Waste Land, ed. by Valerie Eliot: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Them, by Joyce Carol Oates: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
Theory of Criticism, by Philip Hobsbaum: *Patrick Cruttwell* 323
They Feed They Lion, by Philip Levine: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
Three Lovers, by Julia O'Faolain: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Three Poems, by John Ashbery: *Richmond Lattimore* 475
To Stay Alive, by Denise Levertov: *William H. Pritchard* 119
Torregreca, by Ann Cornelisen: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry, ed. by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg: *Vernon Young* 659
The Trial of Christopher Okigbo, by Ali A. Mazrui: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Turning To Look Back, by John Woods: *Vernon Young* 659
Twenty Poems, by John Haines: *William Dickey* 295
Two: A Phallic Novel, by Alberto Moravia: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 497
Vendetta of Silence, by Ann Cornelisen: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
Walking Papers, by Sandra Hochman: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
The Way It Is Now, by Sallie Bingham: *James P. Degnan* 330
Welcome Eumenides, by Eleanor Ross Taylor: *Vernon Young* 659
The Western Coast, by Paula Fox: *Roger Sale* 703
The Wintering, by Joan Williams: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
With Shuddering Fall, by Joyce Carol Oates: *Marvin Mudrick* ... 142
Women at Yale: Liberating a College Campus, by Janet Lever and Pepper Schwartz: *Patricia Meyer Spacks* 157
Wonderland, by Joyce Carol Oates: *Marvin Mudrick* 142
Patricia Meyer Spacks 157

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"An important contribution to American fiction." —*Granville Hicks*



SOME OTHER PLACE. THE RIGHT PLACE.—a bold, bawdy, joyful odyssey to the ghost villages of the mind taken by two young lovers who venture deep into the mysteries of time and experience. A new novel by Donald Harington, author of *The Cherry Pit* and *The Lightning Bug*.

A story of lost places in the heart, SOME OTHER PLACE. THE RIGHT PLACE. is a hypnotic tale of lost lives, abandoned dreams and the dying of childhood. The story of a boy who loved a girl, of a boy who took a girl on a long outing to the town of lost dreams...

SOME OTHER PLACE THE RIGHT PLACE.

A novel by

DONALD HARINGTON

$8.95 at all bookstores

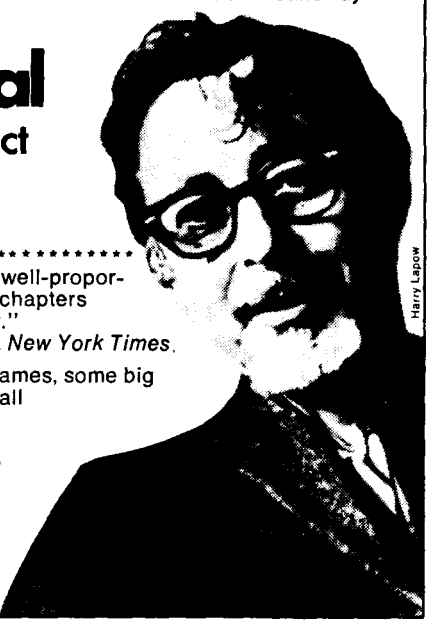
LITTLE, BROWN and COMPANY

"Jerre Mangione has written a classic." —*Elizabeth Janeway*

The Dream And The Deal

The Federal Writers' Project 1935-1943

Jerre Mangione



Harry Lapow

* *

"A thing of passing grace and power—a well-proportioned history that grasps us in its early chapters and lifts us effortlessly into the vital past."
—*Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, New York Times*.

"The petty scandals, the triumphs, the names, some big now, some fading into the shadows, are all set down here with humor and superb objectivity. *Mangione's work is, without qualification, the definitive history of the Writers' Project."—Loren Eiseley*

"Fascinating reading."
—*Christian Science Monitor*

$12.50 at all bookstores

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Spanish classics nobody knows

LIBRO DE BUEN AMOR
by Juan Ruiz

Edited, with an Introduction and English Paraphrase, by Raymond S. Willis. Long hidden behind an archaic text, the delights of Juan Ruiz' "Book of Good Love" are now accessible in a dual-language edition of lucid English and carefully modernized Spanish. A fourteenth-century masterpiece that ranks with *Canterbury Tales* and *Roman de la Rose*, these enchanting tales of love, scenes of town and country, allegories and fables, are brought together under the guise of autobiography. Cloth, $20.00;
Limited Paperback Edition, $9.50

THE SPAIN OF FERNANDO DE ROJAS
The Intellectual and Social Landscape of La Celestina
by Stephen Gilman

This major piece of historical detective work adds a new dimension to critical studies of the fifteenth-century masterpiece that critics have ranked second only to *Don Quixote*. Professor Gilman establishes the identity and reconstructs the world of the heretofore "anonymous" author, Fernando de Rojas – student, country lawyer, converted Jew in Inquisition Spain. $17.50

CERVANTES' CHRISTIAN ROMANCE
A Study of Persiles y Sigismunda
by Alban K. Forcione

Cervantes considered the *Persiles* his masterpiece, but its episodic character and confusing proliferation of action has troubled modern readers. Professor Forcione discerns a coherent cycle of catastrophe and restoration linked symbolically to the Christian vision of man's fall and redemption. Remarkably, too, he establishes the relationship between the *Persiles* and the seemingly antithetical *Don Quixote*.
Princeton Essays in European and Comparative Literature. $7.95

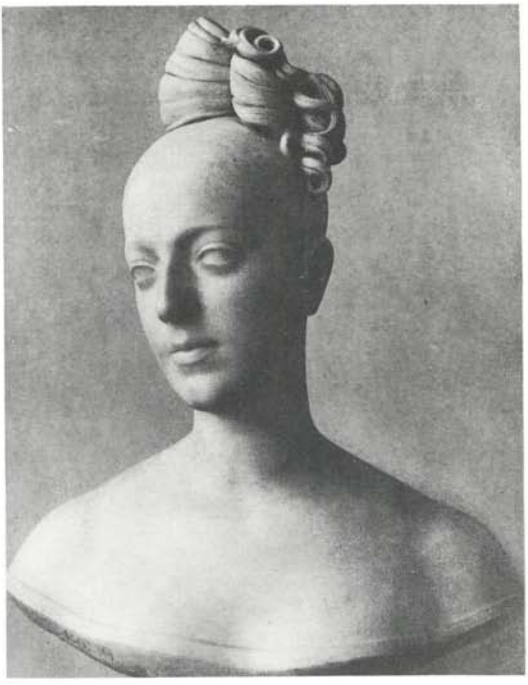
Princeton University Press

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

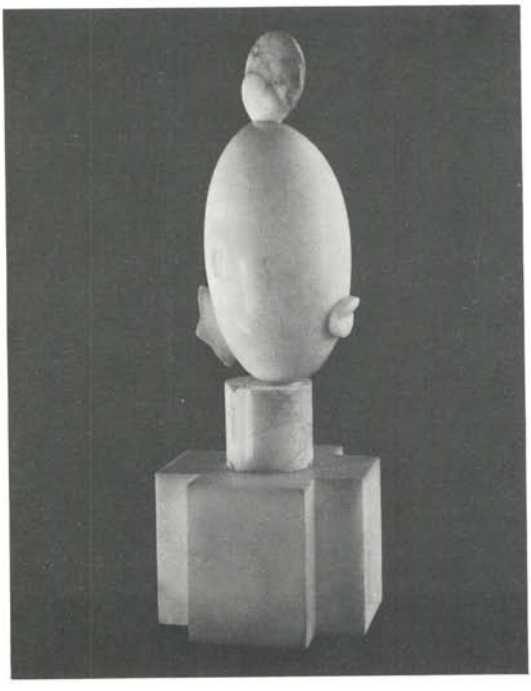
Sorceress
1916
Wood 39⅜" high
Limestone base, 5⅞" high.
(Oak base, 1920, in three sections, 38⅜" high)
(The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum)

Prodigal Son
c. 1914
Oak, 17½" high. Limestone base, 12½" high.
(Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection '50-134-8)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Baron Bosio; Marquise de la Carte
1836
marble
(private collection, France)



The White Negress
1924
Marble, 19″ high. Marble base, 6⅜″ high.
(Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection '50-34-6)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mlle. Pogany II
1919
Veined marble on limestone and wood base. Head only 17⅜" high.
(collection of Mr. and Mrs. James W. Alsdorf, Winnetka, Illinois)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

King of Kings
Undated
Wood
118⅛" high
(The Solomon G. Guggenheim Museum)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED